



I NEVER RUN OUT OF MANA

BOOK 01

Rekshu

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

I Never Run Out of Mana

(선독점 마나가 닳지 않아)

by

Rekshu

(렉슈)

Synopsis

Have you ever seen a hunter spamming infinite meteors?

That's me.

It is now 40 years after monsters started appearing in the world and with it, Awakened.

Min-Cheol feels that life is unfair, comparing his life to the ones which the Awakened lead.

After a scuffle with one of the Awakened, he gains an ability which allows him to have infinite mana.

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Chapter 1 - Obtaining The Power

Behemoths began to appear on earth about 40 years ago.

About 22 years before I was born?

Anyway, you can guess right?

I'm eightee....

No, [eighteen years old](#).

(TLN: In Korean there are two ways of pronouncing numbers, and the first way he says "eighteen" is "ship-pal", which sounds similar to "shibal", which is an offensive word.)

Your average, fearless, South Korean high school student.

As for my possessions, well, I don't have shit.

I'm a student, so that's only obvious.

But even if you don't consider the fact that I'm a student, I'm still poor as a damn dog.

... I'm a non-Awakened...

What am I talking about?

The world has changed to become extremely unfair. Ah, not that it was fair before the change.

But it's even more unfair now.

It's fucked up.

The Awakened kill Behemoths, get praised as the era's hero and become rich as fuck.

If the non-Awakened want to become rich, they have to suck their thumbs and wait for their weekly lottery ticket, hoping to win.

So I'm just studying hard.

Who knows?

If I do well in my SATs and graduate from a good university, maybe I could join a guild or the Awakened Association as an office worker?

If it goes really well, maybe I could even become the manager of an Awakened.

“... So, throughout South Korea’s history...”

Snore~

And my buddy Hwang Jae-Hyuk is sleeping.

He’s even snoring.

Even so, the teacher doesn’t do anything about it.

It’s not because he’s given up.

This guy was told that he is an Awakened during his first year of high school.

Basically, he’s going to live a successful future where everything is secure.

And he’s even in the warrior line of the Awakened.

Just thinking about it, it’s about [as fair as a dog’s dick](#).

(TLN: Think of it as “Just thinking about it, it’s unfair as fuck.” Yes, the author literally wrote “unfair as a dog’s dick”.)

Why does that guy get to be born with everything.

And why do I have nothing.

He’s just fulfilling the necessary education that the nation has decreed.

Just think of it as an education system which prevents the Awakened from turning on the nation, a disciplinary system.

At school he sleeps and after school he earns money! So unfair, this fucking world!

Ah, let’s just not even think about it.

I'll just keep studying.

Because this is all I can do.

And the one reason that I work so earnestly! Family!

The only family member I have left, my mother.

I think of my mother who would be working tirelessly at the restaurant, always saying that she would raise her useless son alone all her life.

[Euduek~](#)

(TLN: Sound of gritting teeth.)

Then my molars grind hard against each other.

She only looks at me and dedicates her entire life to me.

When I think of my mother, my heart always hurts.

It can only do that.

A long time ago.

It was around when I was in my 2nd year of elementary school.

The human who called himself my father, addicted to both alcohol and gambling, used to beat my mother a lot.

Even so, my mother never let out a sound.

Because I was in the room.

She didn't want to show her son that side of her.

Even so, I was fully aware.

We're a family that lives together in a single house, how could I not know?

The next day, I would see the torn and bruised face of my mother.

I even tried to just look at the knot patterns in the carpet on the floor, but still.....

One day, father died.

Father? No, 'A man who called himself my father died.' That should be it.

That's what it's like in my mind.

It seemed that he had borrowed money from all sorts of loan sharks to fuel his gambling addiction.

Five days after he was reported to be missing, I was able to meet the man known as my father.

With two hollow eyes, and with a Y-shaped cut which ran from his chest to his belly...

Honestly, I was a bit sad.

But deep inside my heart, I was laughing.

We can be happy now.

Now mother doesn't have to be hurt anymore.

I laughed because those thoughts were there.

The debt of 2 million Won kept on growing.

Like that, the man known as my "Father" left a debt of 40 million Won and slowly faded away from my memories.

Ding-Dong-Dang-Dong~

Interrupting my fleeting thought, the bell that signals lunchtime rings.

The teacher leaves the room immediately.

And, my buddy Hwang-Jae-Hyuk opens his eyes instantly.

What a scary guy.

How does he rise up, sharp as a knife's edge, as soon as lunch starts?

It can't not be some amazing ability.

Of course! Although this probably isn't an Awakened ability....

“Hey.”

Jae-Hyuk faces me and hands over 500 Won.

Wow, this guy is really nice.

If you thought that, you'd be wrong.

Because this guy... is a delinquent.

“Buy me two chocolate breads and a bottle of Coke with this.”

Did he not receive primary school education? He must've [cooked and eaten his math textbook](#).

(TLN: This is a Korean phrase - If you cook something up and eat it, it's like it goes through one ear and out the other. This phrase basically means that he's a retard who never studied.)

And with bread, you're supposed to drink milk you idiot...

"That's not enough money..."

I replied like that.

And I know exactly what will happen afterwards.

“Ahh. Min-Cheol, do you want to die?”

The bastard stares at me while calling my name.

But I'm trying my best in order to not give in.

Yeah... I'm Jae-Hyuk's bread shuttle.

Although sad, that's the reality.

Although the difference between an ordinary person and an Awakened differed with the Awakened's rank, if you treated the ordinary person's strength as '1' then the Awakened's strength would be '10'.

Anyway, when it came to do with money I was really sensitive about it.

So, this idiotic order of telling me to go [buy 2 chocolate breads and a cola with only 500 Won](#) is something I can't accept.

(TLN: It's like handing 50 cents to get bread and Coke.)

It's the iron law of the National Association of Bread Shuttles... I'm joking.

If Jae-Hyuk handed over 3000 Won, then I would've gone.

Although it's a petty excuse, I can eat lunch and exercise at the same time while going back and forth.

But the disadvantageous demand of using my own money to buy the items, I can't accept.

I can't use my own money to buy the items.

I gave the 500 won back to Jae-Hyuk.

"Haah~ Has this bastard gone crazy?"

As he said that, he raises his eyebrows and suddenly stands up from the chair.

Honestly, probably because I'm human, I'm scared.

But I can't surrender.

Because, the 2000 Won that my mother gave to me this morning, it can't be used for this piece of shit bastard.

"Do you want to get hit a few times first, or do you wanna just go?"

I don't reply.

He starts hitting me.

Smack! Smack! Smack!

His punch lands in my pit of the stomach.

I'm winded, and it hurts a lot.

"Keu...Keuhuek....!"

Hurts.

Annoying.

So scary.

If only this fucker disappeared from the world like the guy who called himself my father... That would be good.

And...

In this unfair world.

If only I could become a millionaire.

I could laugh at these pieces of trash in front of me, and live my own life.

Well, screw the other things, first my mother...

Pow!

My consciousness cuts off.

And before I black out.

Something seems to ring in my head.

.
.br/>.

[Your body has awakened.]
[‘You have obtained the Frost Orb spell’]

Kim Min-Cheol

Level : 1
Exp : [0/100]

Class: Magician

Special Attribute: Mana doesn't run out.

Strength: 10

Mana: ∞

Agility : 10

Vitality : 10

Unspent Points: 0

Chapter 2 - Obtaining The Power (2)

-Tak!

My teacher's pool cue whacks my head.

At that moment, I regain consciousness.

“Hey Min-Cheol, just because Jae-Hyuk is sleeping, you're sleeping too?”

“Sorry...”

“You want to get into university, right? Pay attention.”

With my mind still hazy, I try to analyze what happened. It seems that this bastard Hwang Jae-Hyuk, even when he knew I fainted, didn't take me to the hospital... Not even the infirmary! I think he just left me lying down like I was sleeping.

Whether to hit him to death, or to hammer him to death, or to use a fingernail clipper to shred him to death...

While I'm thinking about such impossible things, I put my hand into my pocket to ensure that my 1000 Won notes were still ok.

Thankfully the money is still there.

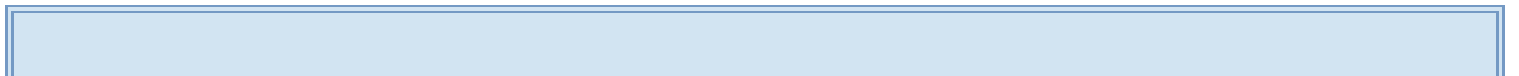
I feel embarrassed, submissive and angry. This situation is so disgusting that I could throw up.

Over these two fucking pieces of paper... Why, to a guy like me who has no abilities...

Eh? What's this?

In the upper-right corner of my vision, I can see a small icon like a smartphone application notification.

‘Did I hit my eyes hard with a handphone?’ As I wonder this, a hologram-like status bar appears in front of the teacher, who is currently busy teaching.



Kim-Min-Cheol

Level: 1

Exp: [0/100]

Class: Magician

Special Ability: Mana doesn't run out.

Strength: 10

Mana: ∞

Agility: 10

Vitality: 10

Unspent points: 0

Possessed Skills

Frost Orb Lv. 1 [0/100]

‘Wow... So I died and came back to life and now I’m seeing hallucinations...’

Wait! I can faintly remember what happened just before I lost consciousness.

-Your body has Awakened.

No! I remember it clearly. This is reality.

Ding-Dong-Dang-Dong~

The bell which signified the end of 7th period rang.

“Freak~ I thought you died but guess not? Well, just don’t rebel like that and just follow my orders~ Who knows? Because you’re a dog that listens well, maybe someone will make you an Awakened manager?”

Hwang-Jae-Hyuk, who woke up like a ghost, spoke to me sarcastically as he prepared to go home.

Yeah! It’s confirmed.

Hwang-Jae-Hyuk, you bastard, you’re going to die by fingernail clipper!

I made a mortified smile and wished him well on his way back home.

Fucking jerk, I had to say that like a fool with a smile.

I go back home feeling excited and sit down in front of the computer.

As always, mother is out working at the diner.

She always, without missing a day, prepares breakfast and then goes to work at the break of dawn.

From the time the diner opens to the time it closes... She spends 16 hours a day at the diner.

All the money that she earns working like a dog every day goes to the loan sharks.

It's a reality that allows me to [remember](#)... no, remember the human who called himself my 'father'.

(TLN: In Korean, the first 'remember' is said in a respectful way. Obviously, MC holds disgust for his father, so he switches it to a less respectful way.)

If only she didn't have a useless son like this, she probably would've suffered less.

Usually, I would use some powerful videos to comfort myself and then study, but today is different!

I feel both hunger and excitement I never felt in my life before.

I open an internet browser and search up details on my Awakening and my passive skill.

-Awakened Rookie Forums-

I look around here and see a lot of information saying that you normally hear a narration about becoming an Awakened and see a status screen at the right-hand side of your vision.

I have confidence.

That this is an opportunity that God has given me, that I am now what I always envied, an 'Awakened'!

I'm not sure if it's good to be having these kind of thoughts already, but I imagine my mother going to the markets to go buy tofu in an imported car with a chauffeur.

I can't even imagine getting a housekeeper in the reality I am living in right now.

I'll just let my mother have a wonderfully comfortable life!

I try to calm down; my heart is leaping up and down about to explode. Then I go on the forums again.

I saw many situations where even when people Awoke they got classes and passives that weren't even enough to make a living, so I searched up my passive ability which allows me to have infinite mana.

-Red Desert mana doesn't run out infinite walkthrough!

-Blessyou magician infinite mana system tree (beginner's usage)

"Fucking game addicts"

Only useless game guides pop up.

I try the Magician Line Awakened cafe, but the results are basically the same.

There is a skill called 'Mana Regen'.

But it's an active skill, not a passive one, and it only regains 15% of the user's mana.

Of course, the casting time would be different as your proficiency went up, but the cooldown seems to be approximately 30 minutes.

The Skill Book price seems to have so many zeroes that I stopped counting at 10 million.

My brain is working at a seriously fast pace at this point.

"Wait... This... Ha~ This really..."

Without me knowing, laughter came out.

It's like winning the top prize in the lottery, I feel nervous but

excited.

Right out, the Skill Book regenerates 15% of your mana on a 30-minute cooldown is worth millions...

My ability is a passive skill, and it gives me infinite mana...?

I quickly run out of the house and go to a playground where there were no people.

I want to see my ability with my own eyes.

I already know about how to use skills thanks to my searches.

The skill that is automatically given to an Lv1 Magician Awakened, 'Frost Orb'.

Like in games, when starting out as a Magician levelling up is very hard.

Of course, to rich Awakened it's a different story.

They can easily obtain advanced Skill Books and can level up with high-levelled servants.

It's abnormally unfair.

This is why the Magician class is hard.

You get 10 points of stats like the Warrior class branch, but Lv1 skills use up a lot of mana.

So, at low levels, instead of physical abilities, using skills to hunt is the correct way for Magicians to level up.

In my mind, I think of the skill name 'Frost Orb'.

Like the video I saw online, blue spheres that about the size of a baseball float up on top of my hands.

"Ah, I'm getting goosebumps!" Unconsciously, I said it with a loud voice.

'Kueg' a laugh came out.

Like a kid who tasted candy for the first time, I can't resist this

excitement.

I stretch my hand to the beer can that was on a bench.

-Dalgeurak! Tudududug!

The orbs hit the can without any sound or shaky movements.

When I check carefully, the first orb seems to have frozen the can and the second one seems to have torn the can to pieces, like it was paper.

Even when I see it with my own eyes I can't believe it.

I silently stare at my hands and say 'Frost Orb' at the ground.

The ground turns into a sheet of ice and the sound of hard ice rings out in the quiet playground.

It said in the video that it's hard for an Lv1 Awakened to cast 'Frost Orb' more than five times.

Although you couldn't see their mana gauge through the video, many Magician Awakened commented that they felt the same way.

But I can't see my mana gauge. I looked at the beginners 'Awakened Guide' which explained things with pictures so it was easy to understand, their status bar was different from mine.

You can say that I don't have a mana pool, and was Awoken to be able to infinitely use mana.

So, I can easily ignore trivial things like mana management!

If I could learn a skill then I can use that skill without any restrictions.

"Nyunnyu nyannya screw everything and get Skillbook~[bookbookbook~galeugebgeb bookbookbook](#)~"

(TLN: I have no idea what he's saying either. I don't keep up with slang, dammit! Basically, he seems to be just singing about how he loves skillbooks.)

I start singing without thinking.

Back at home, I look at Skill Book prices.

The Skill Books I saw at the cafe auction seem to have widely varied prices depending on which classes they're for.

Especially Magicians, their Skill Books were astronomically high price.

It's probably because even when hunting in parties there's low risk in using them and they can destroy multiple monsters with powerful, long-ranged attacks.

-drrrck drrrck

The mouse wheel keeps scrolling [like a god](#).

(TLN: probably means it's working really well)

"What I need right now is information... Information..."

I don't feel anything like hunger at this point.

-ttirik ttik ttik ttik ttik ttirororong~

I heard the sound of the front door opening.

"Son~ Mom's here~"

"You're back?"

"Yeah, have you eaten?"

Seeing my mother's face, I finally begin to feel hungry.

With the hunger, I feel a wave of unfamiliar emotions, and my eyes are filled with tears.

This fucking poverty and debt, my mother working at the diner, I can say goodbye to all of it now. Seriously, goodbye! Say goodbye!

"I haven't eaten, Ms. Park~ I have something to say~ let's eat together!"

I say to my mother with a cutesy expression.

As she cleans up after dinner, I say one sentence.

“Mother, I’ll protect you from now on...”

I can keep at least this one promise, right?

Chapter 3 - Getting A Goal

I haven't told my mother what has happened to me.

I want to go ahead and tell her that I'll make her life comfortable, and say 'You don't need to go through all those hardships anymore.'

But.

That's for when I'm able to use this cheat properly to profit!

That's when I'll tell her and surprise her.

Until then, it's a secret.

Because my mother would obviously be against the idea of me having to face dangerous monsters.

After a dinner that was more satisfying than usual, I go back to my room.

Now that I know about my ability, I need to think about how to level up and how to become rich as fuck.

I go around many Awakened guild forums and collect various information.

It says that you need to first go into the Awakened Association's site and report that you are an Awakened.

You have to submit the report within a month of becoming an Awakened.

This rule doesn't just end with fines.

You could even taste the dew of the execution grounds if you disobey it.

Even at school, students undergo physical examinations to check if they were Awakened every 3 months.

But I won't report myself straight away.

That's partially because I'm saving it up as a surprise event for mother.

But it's mainly because I feel a sense of excitement as I hide my power, which is different from any other Awakened.

"Cough cough, respect my preferences please, keh keh."

Just thinking about it makes this situation enjoyable.

I record the date to report in to the Association on my smartphone's calendar app.

-Ttum ttap-Ttum ttum tap-Good morning~ Good morning~

The alarm rings out loudly.

I don't know when I fell asleep.

I was sitting at the computer, searching for skills like crazy...

While eating the breakfast that mother prepares for me every day, I talk to myself.

"First! A strong skill with long range."

"Second! A skill that is imbalanced by its high mana consumption."

"Third! A skill that is cheap due to that imbalance! Bingo!"

"There's only that. Lightning Spray!"

It's a skill that I tried to find until my fingers started hurting.

There are tons of commercials for it.

The price is around [800,000 to 1,000,000 won](#).

TLN: About \$700-900 USD

It's laughable that it's that cheap, considering my situation.

It's a skill that gets traded around pretty often too. It's that powerful.

But the one reason that it can't be a main skill! That would be its

insanely high mana cost.

A few Awakened novices bought the skill book, enticed by the relatively cheap cost for such a high strength skill.

But the results were poor.

The skill 'Lightning spray' takes up 500 mana for every use.

And as the level of the skill rises, so does its mana cost.

The mana cost of 'Frost Orb' is 10 mana. Do you get the idea of how abnormal the mana cost of Lightning Spray is?

A level one Magician class Awakened can use 'Frost Orb' about five times. One point of the Int stat boosts MP by five points.

I wonder if there is any other skill that suits me this much other than 'Lightning Spray'.

Now I have my first goal since becoming an Awakened. The Skill Book: 'Lightning Spray'.

I go to school.

With a face full of confidence that's different from my usual face!

"Min-Cheol, you ok?"

It's Tae-Seong, a guy who sits behind me.

"What?"

"I mean, you got wrecked by Jae-Hyuk."

'And who's the bastard that knew about it but didn't say anything?'

These words are on the tip of my tongue, but I hold back.

"Ah~ It's ok, it happens all the time."

It's this strange kind of greeting.

We just gather together and talk about our own interests.

These guys don't think of me as a friend anyway.

“Wow~ Our Min-Cheol came to school after that beating?”

That thing that I knew was going to come finally arrives.

“Yeah!”

I reply bluntly.

“Yeah, I guess you have to come to school and study, I mean, what else would you do? But the way you’re talking is really annoying, you know? If you want to keep getting beaten up, then keep talking like that, okay?”

The bastard spat out anger-inducing words without hesitation.

He have been born in a breeding facility.

But I’m different from yesterday.

I won’t do what he wants and then have to fake laughter.

I will make myself understand, and I won’t work with him.

While I’m thinking these thoughts, the bastard’s already pulled out his cushion and is getting ready to sleep.

I can’t concentrate throughout the entire lesson.

My head is filled with thoughts about what I have to do in the future.

It seems to be really hard.

I need a proper advisor, not just a forum post.

It would be stupid to ask Hwang Jae-Hyeok, and... Haah... So annoying.

Entrance to hunting grounds, loot, everything...

I only study, I don’t know how the world works.

-Ding-Dong-Dang-Dong

The bell which signals the end of 1st period rings out.

I’m locked in my thoughts. Trivial things like lessons or the bell

don't even reach my ears.

“Hey, did you see that yesterday?”

“What?”

“How Choi So-Hyeon cleared the Level 28 dungeon for the first time?”

“Retard, is it the first time that Level 28 dungeons have been cleared?”

“Ugh! Dude~~ Dude~~ It's a solo clear, you retard!”

“Real?”

“Really! It's not just the first for Korea; it's the first for the entire world!”

“Amazing, hooray for Korea! But hey, is Choi So-Hyeon your friend? Huh? Kekekeke.”

A conversation that pulls my interest is going on behind me.

It's between Tae-Seong and his buddy Jin-Ho.

After the appearance of monsters, the fame of the top Awakened is pretty much the on the level of idols.

There are even fan clubs.

“Tae-Seong.”

“Yeah?”

“Do you know a lot about Awakened or dungeons?”

Jin-Ho speaks up before Tae-Seong can reply.

“Hey, this guy's an absolute Awakened worshipper.”

I smile genuinely as I look at Jin-Ho. Jin-Ho is laughing.

I feel like I can get information which wasn't on the internet forums.

“But why are you so interested all of a sudden?”

“Ah well, I saw a documentary yesterday and it was quite interesting.”

I naturally ravel my story.

“Ahem~! Where should I start...? Do you know when and how the monsters came to be?”

Since I appear to have an interest in his profession, he looks at me and starts talking. It looks like he’s enjoying himself.

‘Ah... I don’t want a theory lesson like an instruction manual...’ I want to say those words.

But for now, I need information.

“I don’t really know, I just got a sudden interest in it...”

I smile and listen to Tae-Seong talk.

The beasts that Tae-Seong talks about appeared about 40 years ago.

All around the world, purple Portals appeared.

The Portals didn’t appear with any order, logic or pattern.

Randomly appearing, humanity felt fear and amazement at seeing those Portals.

But within an hour of the Portals appearing, we came to know that those things should not exist.

This is because the Portals exploded and started to vomit monsters into our world.

Many people were killed by them.

Every country gathered their forces to fight back against them.

But over the next three days, we realised how to stop the beasts from coming through the Portals.

Going through the Portal and killing all the monsters.

If all the monsters and the boss died, the Portal would become a

dungeon, and no more explosions would happen.

Back then, military weapons were able to kill them.

And like that, humanity adapted.

But, as the days went by, the Portals also evolved.

With the monsters inside...

Near the Portals, rings like the the ones in the cross-section of a tree appeared.

Humanity considered the Portals as mere housework at this point, but we suffered more casualties as the monsters got stronger over the years.

The variety of the monsters increased too.

Then, with the military as their focus, 'Awakened' began to appear.

"They could've just destroyed all the Portals as soon as they appeared!"

I point out the most simple and correct solution.

"Hmm... Yeah! But what about the places that humanity couldn't conquer?"

"What if the Portals appeared beneath the ocean, or in jungles or on top of mountains? And, the Portals keep appearing every year!"

Tae-Seong continues to explain in a knowledgeable tone.

I slowly began become [interested](#) in his words.

TLN: He was faking his interest before but now he actually has interest.

"Right now, there are Portals from level 1 through to level 40. But Portals above level 28 don't explode. Isn't it strange? Like they're waiting for something big?"

-Pak! Pak! Pak!

“Really, you three, if you don’t want your heads to explode can you shut up and stay still?”

Jae-Hyuk hits the three of us on our heads and glares at us.

Fucking beggar, carnivore, ugly, inhuman bastard!

Yeah~ I’ll step over you soon enough, so just wait!

“S-Sorry, Jae-Hyuk.”

Tae-Seong and Jin-Ho apologise profusely.

I guess they want to avoid danger.

“Let’s talk more at lunch.”

I say that to the other two, then turn to face the front.

“Oi! Kim Min-Cheol, you mad? Why don’t you say something!”

As Jae-Hyuk’s finishes talking, what I see isn’t the front of the classroom, but its floor.

Ding-Dong-Dang-Dong

Everyone stares at me.

But not for long.

I guess they don’t want to get caught up in it.

“This fucker, I let him go when he was being cheeky this morning, and then [he goes and fucking does this?!’](#)”

TLN: Basically he’s angry because Min-Cheol isn’t responding to his shit.

“Ugh... Ugh...”

It hurts! Even though I’m an Awakened too, it fucking hurts!

Luckily, it seems that my bones aren’t broken.

What level is this guy!?”

“Hey, the teacher’s coming!”

Jae-Hyuk stomps on me one more time before returning to his

seat, seething.

The teacher's really doing me a lot of favors here.

Chapter 4 - Getting A Goal (part 2)

It's been a week since my Awakening.

In that time I've filed the report stating that I'm an Awakened, and got an 'Awakened Certificate'.

Originally I was planning to report right before the time limit, but I learned that without an 'Awakened Certificate' you can't enter dungeons.

It's like buying a Benz without having a driver's license.

I sat through 6 hours of boring basic education and 2 days of combat training.

But the Certificate I received after was enough to get me all excited again.

Well, it's only a card that has a photo, name, class and the issuing date though.

Since I got it after the holidays, the school wasn't informed.

My mother wouldn't know either, right?

Entering a dungeon was easier than I thought.

At the entrance of a legally sanctioned dungeon there's a certification card terminal and a fingerprint scanner. You insert your 'Awakened Certificate', after it gets processed you use the fingerprint scanner.

The time limit is 1 hour! But there is no limit to how many times you can go in.

There's no limit to the number of people that can go in, but as there is a limit to the amount of loot you can get per run, you get more profit the less people you have right?

The diamond of this era which you can get by killing monsters and bosses inside the dungeon, the 'Blood Stone'!

Because it floated on top of a dead monster's body, it is also called the 'Rising Sun'.

It's an important resource to humanity who evolved with the monsters' arrival.

It's an energy resource whose efficiency goes beyond that of oil, electricity, fire, wind, or nuclear-powered generators.

Of course, the ways of producing energy listed above can only be found in museums or history books now.

The theory exam is over, now the practical exam is just ahead.

According to Tae-Seong and Jin-Ho, to clear a Level 1 dungeon Level 1~5 Awakened form a party of about 5 people to clear it.

The reason for this is safety.

With the brand new start of a new life of an Awakened, the Awakened can't meet the end of it at the same time right?

But today, I go in alone!

Tti-Dik

-Please scan your card.

Tti-Dik

-Please scan your fingerprint.

-The dungeon will now be activated.

I read forum posts until I was worn out just for today!

"I can smell it... The smell of money, it's slowly coming!"

The first thing I feel on entering the dungeon is a muddy floor.

It's like mud or a mire, but it also has a sticky kind of feeling that makes you feel bad.

The second thing is the stench!

It's definitely the smell of mold in a basement, but it also has a familiar fishy scent.

The interior of the dungeon is quite simple.

It's similar to a cave without any split paths. Even though there are no lights anywhere, there's a brightness which is similar to a gentle light being turned on.

Then.

Kkirik! Kkirik! Kkirik!

A sound comes from the inside of the dungeon.

As I step forward, the sound becomes more and more clear.

I get goosebumps as I hear for the first time the cry of a monster.

If the Association's information is correct, the source of this sound should be the 'Black Goat'.

It's literally a black goat.

If there are points that differ it from a normal goat, it would be its erect gait and the halberd that's gripped in its hands which replace its hooves.

"Hey, if it's like this isn't its name just Black Goat?"

I feel that the association's naming sense is actually really unoriginal.

It didn't take a while for the 'Black Goat' to appear in front of me.

A bigger body than I thought, and stupidly large muscles.

'Is it ok for Level 1 dungeons to be like this~'

It gave off pressure enough to make me think this.

"What's motivating me right now is money!"

"What can I do if I shrink away from this low-level dungeon!"

I berate myself as if to try and hide my nervousness.

I summon 'Frost Orb' on both of my hands and prepare for battle.

Kkriyiiiiiik!!!

‘Black Goat’ swings his halberd with a cry to the surroundings.

Although I’m someone who doesn’t have any combat experience, I could see its weakness in a single glance.

Its legs!

Its thin hind legs compared to its strong upper body! It looks as if it can’t support it.

“You’re only a goat and you dare to walk on 2 legs?”

I cast the two ‘Frost Orbs’ at its legs.

-Keueueueu Kkiik!!!

‘Black Goat’ starts to shout and sounds like what you would hear in a slaughterhouse.

Its legs are frozen to the muddy ground.

I again cast ‘Frost Orb’ at his frozen legs.

Chigeureong! Tuduk!

A beautiful sound created by the giant halberd crashing onto the floor is heard.

Its legs get cut off while being stuck in the floor, and its muscular body falls down onto the ground.

It keeps crying out strangely while in pain.

“Hoo..... This is easier than I thought.”

To me who has infinite mana it isn’t a very hard first hunt.

Even if I didn’t see its weakness I could just spam ‘Frost Orb’ and win.

But looking at its eyes I feel a bit sad.

To describe it, should I say a feeling where a hunter who has just finished his first hunt, just before killing his prey with the last attack, their eyes match?

Only for a moment though.

-Huong! Huong!

It drools like it's really excited, and swings its halberd at my legs.

The sadness didn't take a long time to turn into anger.

I spammed 'Frost Orb' at its head, and it eventually turned to dust and died.

[10 exp gained.]

The voice I heard when I Awakened informs me that I got exp.

A 'blood stone' floats above the guy's head.

The hand which holds the 'blood stone' shivers.

It's an opaque white jewel but strangely emits a red light.

My first income in my life!

It's the start! It's the farewell point from poverty!

I put my first income carefully into a hip sack which I prepared beforehand.

Then I stop walking.

Because the noise that told me about the exp rising is [caught up in my heart](#), I open the status.

(TLN: He feels worried for some reason)

Kim Min-Cheol

Level : 1

Exp : [10/100]

Class : Magician

Special Attribute: Mana doesn't run out.

Strength : 10

Mana : ∞

Agility : 10

Vitality : 10

Unspent Points : 0

Current Skills

Frost Orb Lv. 1 [28/100]

Skill exp only rose when it hit the monster.

So if you used a great skill on a large number of monsters, the amount of exp that rose for the skill would be proportionate to the amount of monsters that were hit. Back when I cast the skill at the cans, it didn't count towards the skill exp.

To get to the boss room you have to kill about 30 Black Goats.

The blood stones that I thought would keep coming out every time I killed a Black Goat didn't appear for quite some time after killing that first one.

The amount of blood stones I get after killing about 30 is 2!

It seems like they have a drop rate of less than 10%.

Due to the constant non-appearance of blood stones, I have the thought 'Is there something wrong?' while advancing.

At the boss room, there's a 'Goat King' who is 2 times as big as a 'Black Goat'.

On the way here, I became level 3 and 'Frost Orb' became level 4.

When looking at the giant 'Goat King', I'm feeling thankful at the first 'Black Goat' who presented me with that pressure.

It taught me the 'walkthrough', if you could call it that, of attacking the lower half.

The boss was comparably stronger than the 'Black Goat'.

When it sees me it gets excited and sticks its halberd into the ground, and which starts radiating light.

Even though it was struck on muddy ground it gave off a large shockwave.

But even it didn't last long and eventually knelt down.

It is similar to a boxer's feet being tied together and fighting.

-Keueueueu.....

[30 exp gained.]

The thing that is more exciting than the notification that my exp has risen is the blood stone which rises from the top of its head.

This blood stone was comparably different in size from the other ones.

If a blood stone obtained from an ordinary monster is the size of a thumb, then the blood stone obtained from the boss is the size of your index and middle finger put together.

This also probably has a drop rate of less than 10%. But as if congratulating me for the first dungeon clear, it came out like this. I can't be any happier.

“Haak, big and beautiful!”

‘A day where I talk to myself a lot’ this kind of thought surfaced.

Today's goal is to fill up the hip sack with blood stones from this level 1 dungeon!

At the end of the dungeon which had no monsters left is a exit which is similar to the entrance.

The time it takes to clear this dungeon is about 30 minutes.

Undoubtedly the speed would get faster.

Before the thrill of the first dungeon clear even wore out, I put the card in again.

Ttidik.

Chapter 5 - Getting A Goal (Part 3)

I went straight to the dungeon after lying that I have to go to the library at the crack of dawn.

The hip sack I prepared was pretty full.

I didn't eat or drink anything except for the breakfast that my mother prepared.

But I didn't feel anything like hunger or dehydration.

I once again realised how frightening human greed is.

It was about 9 pm when the sun was going down.

14 hours of continuous hunting... and the hip sack which was as big as my excited heart!

Going back, my footsteps were light rather than being heavy.

On the way home, I go to a busy 'Awakened Market' street and entered into one of the stores.

A place which trades 'blood stones' and sells Awakened weapons, armour, and such.

It's a place that I had never paid any attention to... but now, I wonder how many of them there were.

"Welcome!"

The owner who is wearing a neat suit greets me.

I can clearly see that his gaze towards me, who looks pretty young, isn't nice.

He's definitely viewing me as a brat who will touch this and that and ask annoying questions.

I observe that two robust men are standing next to the owner.

People who use this place are mainly Awakened. By using their powers, they could harm the store's business, so those two are

probably hired bodyguards.

“Yes, hello.”

I give a simple greeting, untie the hip sack and place it on the counter.

The owner’s eyes become big as he looks at the puffed up hip sack.

“I’m disposing of all this.”

I say as I raise my head up.

The owner, who looked at the hip sack’s contents more closely, slowly shrinks back.

His disappointment is clearly shown.

‘Eh? This isn’t the scenario I envisioned would happen?’

The owner doesn’t even give me time to panic and opens his mouth.

“You got this all from a level 1 dungeon right?”

“Yes.”

“It’s all F rank, and there’s 1 transcendent F rank one too.”

Anxiousness assaulted me with the owner’s expression and words.

I didn’t know the commercial rate of the ‘blood stones’ and just constantly hunted.

“45 small ones! And 1 big one!”

I quickly reply like a child who’s pleading for innocence after being unjustly accused of something.

I went to around 30 dungeons today.

I counted all the stones one by one and carefully put them in the hip sack.

It might look like I’m a miser, but counting all that wasn’t

annoying! Or hard! Or confusing!

Therefore, I could only feel down in front of this harvest after all my effort.

“It looks like you just Awakened and hunted all this time to get all this... F ranked essences don't go for that much.”

This piece of dog shit!

I regain my temper and carefully ask.

“Then how much would it all be?”

My chin that didn't know how tall the sky was raised itself and quickly found its proper place.

The owner who touched his tablet PC once or twice replies.

“Let's see... The current price for F rank is 20 thousand won, transcendent F rank is about 50 thousand won. If what you said about the amount is correct...”

The owner keeps talking while punching numbers on a calculator.

“It comes to be about 950 thousand won.”

Ah... no.... It's only 20 thousand won, 50 thousand one per...

It's only [950 thousand](#)...

TLN: 100 won = roughly 1 USD. Well, that's what it was last time I checked. So the MC's total comes to \$9500.

Eh?!

Did this guy get heatstroke or something? Cheap?!

You cosplaying as [Mansour](#)?

TLN: He's referring to Sheikh Mansour the billionaire, owner of the English Football Club, Manchester City.

Disappointment quickly turned into joy, and I felt a thrill from the top of my head to the tip of my toes.

“So, would you like it in cash, or do you want it in ‘Awakened Credit’?”

The store owner asks while putting the blood stones in a stone counter.

The counter splits the small stones and the big stone up, and quickly figures out the price.

“Eh? What’s... that ‘Awakened Credit’ thing?”

The look he had towards me when we first met is all gone and he now has a look towards me as if saying I was cute, and asks: “Really, you haven’t been an Awakened for long huh?”

“Yeah, haha...”

I take a wipe-your-nose-with-your-hand pose and make an embarrassing smile.

“The association doesn’t even explain things like this, freaking governments.”

The owner, who mumbles to himself speaks to me.

“You have your ‘Awakened Certificate’ right?”

“Yeah, I got it.”

“You can use it like a debit card. Give it here.”

“Ok, here you go.”

As I hand over the certificate I feel embarrassed at my non-existent knowledge, and yet feel proud that I’m experiencing a world that not all people can get into.

As the certificate is put into the card terminal some information about me comes up.

“Do you remember your password that you made?”

“Yes! I remember.”

“Ok, put the password in here.”

‘1004’; you probably think that this is simple and dumb right?

But this number is the most important number to me.

My mother’s birthday is on the [4th of October](#).

TLN: In Korea it’s mm/dd/yyyy I believe.

As I enter in the password it displays the information about my latest card usage, and the amount of money I have in it.

The market owner says this as he puts his credit card into the other side of the terminal.

“Item price 950 thousand won, I’ll transfer it.”

“Wait! Do you have the Lightning Spray Skill Book?”

The owner once again looks at me as if I was cute.

“Even if you buy it you can’t use it. The mana cost is abnormally high. Hm... Do you want me to suggest you something different?”

“No! I’m buying it as a gift.”

“Oh, well then...”

The price was 1 million won.

It’s a bit higher than the online price, but the owner gave it to me for 900 thousand won while saying ‘Please keep coming.’

After finishing the trade and checking the money left in my card, I get out of the store confidently.

The Skill Book ‘Lightning Spray’, which I thought I would get ages later, was bought on the first day of dungeon hunting.

“Unbelievable...”

Only a few days ago I got almost beaten to death because of a mere 2000 won.

But now?

It’s like money doesn’t feel like money.

Like harvesting plants from a mountain, all I did was pick up blood stones from a dungeon.

I chuckled and went home.

It was 10pm when I got home.

On the first day of the holidays, from the first hunt I got an unbelievable sum of money.

I stare at the ‘Lightning Spray’ Skill Book.

The Skill Book is about the same size as a manhwa.

When I open it up there are indecipherable hieroglyphs.

To obtain a skill, you have to place the ‘Skill Book’ on your chest and wait about 10 seconds.

As I put the Skill Book on my chest, a gentle light comes out and slowly sublimates.

[Would you learn the skill ‘Lightning Spray’?]

“Of course! Absolutely! Yes!”

[You have learned the skill ‘Lightning Spray.’]

Kim Min-Cheol

Level : 7

Exp : [4200/6400]

Class : Magician

Special Ability : Mana doesn’t run out.

Strength: 10

Mana : ∞

Agility : 10

Vitality : 10

Unspent Points : 30

Current Skills

Frost Orb Lv. 8 [1450/12,800]

Lightning Spray Lv. 0 [0/100]

My gaze rests on the name 'Lightning Spray' only for a moment.

The 30 unspent points attracted my eyes.

I didn't upgrade my stats yet.

Currently, I don't run out of mana, and a mana quantity didn't exist.

The mana stat affects the quantity of mana I can hold and the regeneration rate of mana.

Therefore I had no reason to put points into the mana stat.

Strength upgrades battle speed, stamina, accuracy as well as power.

That's the reason why Magician class Awakened are less popular than Warrior class Awakened.

Of course, you can't select which one you get.

When a warrior and a magician are the same level, have similar ranks of equipment, then the only difference between them are the massive difference between their stats.

The only way to close this gap is to have strong skills and high skill levels.

Ah~I forgot something, the thing which allows you to constantly use those skills, the mana gauge!

This is probably why the Skill Books for the magician class are expensive.

Anyway, even though I'm a magician I don't need to put any points into mana.

Therefore I feel that the most important stat right now is strength.

Even though casting spells at a range is relatively safe, as the dungeon level goes up a high level monster could possibly be able attack me once.

Let's say that I raised my agility, and avoided most of the attacks. But what if I get unlucky and get hit once?

'Few days later~ few days later~ meet him across the Jordan River!'

I ignore the strange voice support and use the 30 points I got from leveling into strength.

Because it's hard to reset your stats, I put them in cautiously and carefully.

Chapter 6 - The Taste Of Money! Manticore

It's been a week since I went out to the hunting grounds. In that week I've gained 11 Levels.

This is actually an amazing growth rate.

Compared to other Awakened, I'm growing many times faster.

To me who never runs out of mana it's quite an obvious outcome.

In a normal Awakened's case, after a party hunt they had to recover their mana and be on guard.

Of course, their recovery rate depends on their mana stat.

But while they had to wait to recover I could spend that time hunting.

I didn't tell my mother about my Awakening yet.

She's a person who only looks after me and cares for me, it's clear that she's going to stop me from hunting because of such worries.

I'm going to tell her after I can get a steady stream of income.

Until I get that large of an income, every month I'll send her an amount of cash with sender names like 'Scholarship Foundation' or 'Sharing Love'.

After a day's hunt is over I disposed of the loot straight away.

However! To avoid suspicion I went to many other different Awakened markets to sell.

About 10 hours or more of hunting and the amount of money I get is 1 million won.

In a week, I get around 5 million won.

But this money so far has to go towards repaying the loan...

It's a really a bittersweet situation.

After graduating from the level 1 dungeon so easily, I skipped a

few levels and went hunting in a level 5 dungeon.

As I learnt the skill 'Lightning Spray', it resulted in faster growth.

It was all due to Lightning Spray's amazing power! And its corresponding huge mana cost! As said, it's an insane spell.

And I infinitely cast said insane spell.

The level of the dungeon that is best suited for me right now is level 6!

A level 6 dungeon requires at least level 10+ Awakened in a party of at least 5 to clear.

But I guess I'll once again graduate early.

"Hunting is really easy. You just need to remember 2 simple things. [Freezing then electrifying, give me the beat!](#)"

TLN: I believe he is making references to a commercial.

Ttiring

A message came right before entering the dungeon.

‘It’s probably mother right?’ With that thought I check the message.

But this one mail makes me move my feet like I’m on drugs.

The mail’s contents are as follows.

-Urgent Notice!

This is the Awakened Association.

Currently due to the lack of ‘Manticore’s Soul Stones’ the ‘Intermediate Plant Center’ is not functioning properly. Therefore the Association has decided to directly purchase ‘Manticore’s Soul Stones’ from you Awakened.

If you own this item please come to the Association to sell.

1 : 1 billion won.

The Awakened Association – what a thick compensation.

8:24 am.

I don’t know what a ‘manticore’ is...

Ah screw it! But if I have one of those I think everything will be fine...

The Intermediate Plant Center.

A place that people made to grow unusual-devouring plants. This was due to the portals’ creation and explosions which resulted in the killing of many people and therefore creating worker losses... simply put, it's a greenhouse!

But this greenhouse’s plant growth speed is amazing.

Any plant can grow to its best quality as long as it’s been given 24

hours.

If the [First Qin Emperor](#)'s elixir of eternal youth existed, humanity living forever probably wouldn't be a dream.

TLN: The First Qin Emperor apparently searched for this plant thing which would grant you eternal life/youth.

It seems that the Center uses 'manticore soul stones' as its main power source.

I quickly unlock my phone and search about 'manticores'.

Manticores are monsters that appear at the level 12 dungeon. But I didn't hesitate.

I quickly move to the level 12 dungeon.

As I near the entrance I see many Awakened that I didn't see before milling around.

"Looking for one healer-class Awakened!"

"Looking for a tanker. Will reward with lots of loot."

Money is scary after all.

In less than 10 minutes all these Awakened gathered here...

The me of 10 minutes ago corrupted by money is long forgotten.

Awakened without parties were trying to get party members whose class would be needed for their party.

"Looking for a high-mana magician. If you come we're departing straight away! There's one place for a long-range damage dealer!"

'Min-Cheol ssi come here! Take one million~' hearing it like that is probably an illusion right?

I quickly move up to the man and ask.

"Is there something like a level limit?"

"Ah, we would prefer a level 45+, and someone who has learnt at least more than one greater magic spell. Our party members are all

level 45+ too.

Wait, why is the difference between the level 6 dungeon and the level 12 dungeon so much?

The level limit is insanely high, but I have to go.

“I’m only level 11, but my ‘Mana Regeneration’ skill level is quite high and I also learnt ‘Lightning Spray’. Oh yeah, and I set my items to all mana buffing, is it possible for me to join?”

While looking at the forum posts that have a ton of flaunting and things, I really coveted their equipment.

Of course, 2% of my thoughts were to buy them to hide my passive during party hunts.

At the ‘Awakened Market’ street, I bought a replica rank staff, 4 rings, 2 bracelets, and one necklace all for only 200 thousand won.

Someone said that clothes are wings, due to this my outer appearance looks quite good.

The man scans me quickly and says.

“Your level’s too low... How many times can you cast Lightning Spray? With your mana regeneration.

Talk to a person who lies, for me lying is too hard.

The equipment I bought has mana increasing effects, the rings each increase 50, necklace 100, and bracelets each increasing 5% of my mana.

Ah~ Of course, that would be if they were the real deal.

In the ‘Lich King’s Staff’ case, it grants 200 more mana and increases your maximum mana by 15%, it’s a mid-high rank weapon for magicians.

If I actually had bought one of any of these items for real, it would’ve cost me a few ten to a few hundred billion won.

‘Addition, multiplication then multiplication again! Add some

division too!’ I fully used my brain which was pretty much frozen for the past few days.

It’s because I have to give out a decent lie.

The amount of mana I get from the items and level up points is 3500!

“If I use regeneration as well... I can use it about 8 times.”

As if to say ‘look at this!’, I quickly use lightning spray multiple times with my left hand and then cancel it.

‘Seeing is believing!’

Jjeojeok! Jjeojeok! Jjeojeok!

To me this is nothing. I can do this all day.

But not to that man.

Look at that guy’s expression! And why are you raising your guard?

After he realises that I wasn’t lying he opens his mouth.

“If...If you can do that much I guess it’s possible.”

Of course it’s possible! Even level 45 magicians with items can only use ‘Lightning Spray’ 2-3 times.

And I already saw you being surprised you idiot!

He continued talking.

“Because you’re a high-mana magician you have to stay inside the healer’s ‘Barrier’.”

“And the tanker will aggro all the monsters and...

.

.

.

“You understand right? Let’s do well.”

The man give me explanations about the plan and the [notice](#).

TLN: The notice is referring to the Awakened Association's mail about the Manticore Soul Stones shortage.

I nod and wait for him to finish talking.

"I understand. Also, how many party members are there?"

This is very important.

Safety is safety but we have to share the 1 billion won's worth 'Manticore Soul Stones' between us.

"With me included there are 4 people."

20 million per person... If it's that much it's an amount of money which I have to hunt for nearly a month for.

Of course it would be more than [12 hours](#)...

TLN: More than 12 hours of his average hunting.

Before entering the dungeon I greet the other party members.

The tanker who will attract the monsters Lee Chang-Hyuk. The healer who is in charge of buffs and health Lee In-Ah.

The necromancer who is in charge of secondary buffs and the main source of debuffs Jo Yong-Hyun and the warrior who explained things to me for ages at the entrance who is the secondary tanker and damage dealer Han Sang-Min.

These guys are all in the same guild.

Except for Han Sang-Min the other 3 didn't talk much, and they seem to be wary of me.

It's probably because I'm a low-level level 11 and I have all these high-price items on me, they probably are less willing.

"Well then, let's go!"

Chapter 7 - The Taste Of Money! Manticore

(2)

The feeling of the dungeon interior was vastly different from the ones I usually frequented. If the previous dungeons had a feeling of a basement, then this dungeon was like a desert. The floor was entirely made of fine sand, and there were no tunnels or walls we could use as a guide. While I looked around Sang-Min started to speak.

“Chang-Hyuk will go in the 9 o’clock direction and I’ll go in the 12 o’clock, and we’ll all meet back here. You know all this but I’ll say it one more time.”

Han Sang-Min’s plan was as follows:

They would split into two teams. Lee Chang-Hyuk, the main tank, and Jo Yong-Hyun, the necromancer, were in one, while Han Sang-Min, the sub-tanker, and Lee In-Ah, the healer, were in the other. These two teams would drive the monsters to the starting location, so we could hunt them.

He said this around the same time I was thinking ‘How, in this wide dungeon, are you going to lure the monsters here?’

“Min-Cheol ssi needs to say here, and get buffed by In-Ah and Yong-Hyun. On my signal fire Greater Magic, understand?”

Why do we need a strategy for a manticore? Can’t we just go on a rampage?

“I understand. I’ll standby.”

“Then let’s go.”

After Sung-Min finished talking he led the party away, and they quickly set off.

I started to worry about whether we could clear the dungeon in the 1 hour time limit.

“Ah, I feel like I came here in vain...”

My thoughts naturally leaked out after the party members were out of my sight.

Well, I can solo level 6 dungeons in 25 minutes.

Loot, exp, it was all mine.

I came for the manticore's soul stone but now I feel a bit of regret.

Has 5 minutes gone by?

“Let it go~ Let it go~ Hmhmhmhm and sky~”

I had just finished drawing on the sand, using the Frost Orb as paint, when I saw Lee Chang-Hyuk and Yong-Hyun rushing towards me at an amazing speed.

“The hell!? Are you luring the monsters, or running away from them?”

He came up to me and lifted his 2 metre high shield.

I felt an unknown strength from the shield that was firmly strapped to his shoulder and arm.

The big axe on his other hand had its grip double-layered to protect his hand and wrist, as if to prove that he was a tanker.

‘Are they playing a war game?’ A black silhouette approached us, like a fog, from the way they came.

Lee Chang-Hyuk turned his head around, and smiled a fishy smile. With a thick voice, he said: “Hey, rookie-young master! Don't freak out and randomly spam skills. Just stick to the back.

(Jjigeureok woodukwooduk)

I could clearly hear the sound of my pride cracking.

I wanted to show him the justice of team-killing, but I barely restrained myself.

He probably dislikes me, because I look like a [gold spoon](#) Awakened, with no worries in the world.

(TLN: ‘Gold Spoon’ means well off, ‘Mud Spoon’ = bad life, ‘Royal Spoon’ = royal life, ect.)

I hit the sarcastic remark back at him, “Just block well. You’re probably going to get sore muscles after this.”

Chang-Hyuk laughed at my reply, and gathered strength in his two hands.

“They’re coming.”

Hang Sang-Min and Lee In-Ah were running here quickly.

With the black crowd that Lee Chang-Hyuk attracted slowly becoming clearer, Han Sang-Min joined us and started to make a plan.

“In-Ah, attack, attack speed, and defense buffs, please. Also, cast ‘Barrier’ around Young-Hyun and Min-Cheol ssi, as they’ll be supporting us at the back.

Without replying she nodded, and gave everyone buffs. Then she casted ‘Barrier around Young-Hyun and me.

The barrier, that looked like light blue glass, surrounded me.

If someone did a close-range attack inside the barrier, the barrier would instantly disappear.

It was a shield only suitable for ranged damage dealers.

“Young Hyun, keep casting ‘Spirit Armour’ on Chan-Hyuk and me, okay?”

“Don’t worry, Hyung-nim, I will.”

Shades kept coming out of Sang-Min and Chang-Hyuk’s surroundings and surrounded them.

It was probably a defense system for tankers and close-range damage dealers.

Now it looked like we were finally going to do something.

I wasn't afraid, but I felt a bit anxious.

I trusted in my infinitely producing mana.

Of course, the well-trained party members had a part in it too.

The manticore herd was coming at an amazing speed, leaving a trail of sand behind them.

Their numbers were approximately 800-1000.

And, they were only around half of the monsters in the dungeon.

The monsters weren't too big, only 2 metres, but it let out an overwhelming pressure.

I contributed the pressure to its outward appearance. It had a wavy lion's face, wings on its back, that could be compared to a bat or a dragon's, and a scorpion's tail that was most likely full of deadly poison.

'Wow... I just lost a bit of confidence. Was it just the atmosphere?'

The manticore crowds were in groups of 4-5. The leading manticore pack arrived at tanker Chang-Hyuk.

The manticores spread into a fan position and used their sharp claws to rain attacks on him.

Jjigeureureu caen! Caen!

Chang-Hyuk used his shield and axe to block the claws, while Sang-Min used the swords in his hands.

A sound like a blacksmith hammering steel came out.

Herd after herd kept coming, but Sang-Min didn't give out the attack signal.

In-Ah and Yong-Hyun were continuing to buff and heal.

The end of the long line of manticores was now visible.

“Charging!”

At Sang-Min’s shout, Chang-Hyuk lifted his right foot, which was his centre of gravity, and stepped forward, pushing his shield into the herd of manticores.

“Woaaahhh!”

Ku guung!

With Chang-Hyuk’s short shout, many of the tens of manticores that were surrounding the party were pushed back, as if there was an invisible wall pushing them away.

This was the tanking skill ‘Charging’. It was a main skill for tankers, which utilised shields or weapons to push enemies away.

The manticores that were pushed away collided with the other manticores, and became a single mass of [tens of manticores put together](#).

(TLN: Imagine like, a ball, with the manticores making up that ball.)

“Yong-Hyun, lower resist!”

Yong-Hyun, who was casting ‘Spirit Armour’, busily started to debuff the monsters that were bunched up.

It was a skill that decreased a monster’s physical and magical resistance.

The monsters that were successfully affected had a triangle shape glowing red on their chests.

I could hear Sang Min

“Min-Cheol ssi, now!”

It was time.

Time for ‘Lightning Spray’ to appear.

The party members and the monsters were quite a bit apart due to the skill ‘Charging’.

I could use ‘Lightning Spray’ with both hands, but to avoid suspicion I grabbed my staff with both hands and casted it.

“[Eurya!](#)”

(TLN: Like when a worker picks up a heavy thing, he goes ‘Haaap’ or something, right? Same as that.)

Jjirik! Gigigigik!

Electrical currents, that emitted a blue light, poured out of the end of the staff and started to stretch around.

The attack, much like rain during a storm, had no set patterns or directions, and mercilessly crashed onto the herd.

Their bodies started to explode due to the impact. The ones that were instantly done by the Lightning Spray’s destructive power started to shake all at once.

The currents that had pierced through the monster’s bodies went straight down into the ground, as if they still had strength left.

[120 exp gained.]

[120 exp gained.]

[120 exp gained.]

Chapter 8 - The Taste Of Money! Manticore

(3)

50 manticores were taken out in two attacks, leaving half remaining.

After seeing the nonsensical exp gains, I calmed my excited heart down, before quickly getting rid of the other half the same way.

Blood stones started rising up from the monsters that were defeated.. It was a beautiful sight.

During that, I thought that calling them a 'Rising Sun' wouldn't be an exaggeration.

The few monsters that were still breathing were dispatched by Sang-Min's 'Ilsun' and Chang-Hyuk's axe swings.

In only 15 minutes I got over 10,000 exp, and my levels had risen.

This was actually an amazing amount of exp. I mean, the level 6 dungeon boss only gave out 100 exp.

Not to mention, this exp was divided between 5 people as well.

The party members, who had just finished half the hunt, couldn't stop being in awe of my 'Lightning Spray', as it was stronger than they thought.

Of course, due to the last week's hunting, the Skill Level was now Level 8.

In-Ah buffing the attack increase, and Yong-Hyun debuffing the opponent's damage resistance greatly contributed too.

Typically, you would think that having one tanker and four damage dealers would be more effective, but mixing healers and necromancers together sped up the hunting.

It was probably due to the main skills that each class had.

Meanwhile, after learning 'Lightning Spray', I had no reason to

use 'Frost Orb' in the level 6 dungeon I had a magic which would destroy them in one hit, after all.

Of course...this only applied to me.

The other half was killed in the same way.

After killing all the monsters, we moved in the 12 o'clock direction, and eventually made it to the dungeon centre. Sang-Min shook his head, and said "Ah... this dungeon's a failure."

'Eh? What about a failure?' We hunted all those monsters in only 30 minutes, yet he's saying something about failure?

After seeing the other party members in regret I realised something.

Oh. In this dungeon there was a boss: the boss that dropped the 'Manticore's Soul Stone'. However, he hadn't appeared.

I asked Sang-Min, "Eh!?" Why can't I see the boss?"

Sang-Min saw my panicked face and replied,

"Ah... In this dungeon the boss doesn't always show up. It has a low chance of appearance. . In addition to that, you have to kill all the monsters in the dungeon for it to show up. Manticores have a large aggro radius so we couldn't have missed any... therefore, this dungeon is a failure."

Damn it! I thought it was strange when they said one soul stone equalled 1 billion.

I thought 'The Association is either lazy or rich.'

But even if the boss didn't come out, I could still get a larger profit than clearing a level 6 dungeon solo.

1 run gives over 30,000 exp, many blood stones, and the probability of a manticore soul stone.

'This... I think I should just stay for a few days and [suck the honey](#)?'

(TLN: suck honey = get profits then piss off, just get the sweet stuff.)

After leaving the dungeon, Sang-Min, as if he liked the Lightning Spray's damage, came over.

“Min-Cheol ssi, when can you do it ‘till??”

He brought out his smartphone and continued to talk.

“It's 10am right now, and we can go until 4-5pm. If you're okay with that, then let's hunt together!” ”

“I'm okay until that time too.”

I smiled to myself and thought ‘Nope! I'm cool whenever, be it night or dawn.’“

“Ah, really? That's good. It's hard to get greater damage dealers. You're also really strong compared to your level, so the other guild members like you too.”

“Really? That's a relief.”

After getting my promise of hunting with them, Sang-Min leaves the blood stone calculation to the other members who are restoring their mana and talks to me.

“Min-Cheol ssi, I'll go to the Awakened ATM machine, after we've divided up your share, and send your money to you.

Normally, when hunting with guild members or friends, you would share the loot after all the hunts were finished.

But my case was different, so he probably talked about the loot first.

I think he's a decent guy.

Since it was the first time I had been treated well in my life, I didn't know what to do and started fidgeting.

Young-Hyun spoke up, breaking up the awkward conversation.

“Hyung-nim, there are 12 F ranks and 1 D rank.”

We hunted around 200 manticores, but only 13 stones came out.

It reminded me, once again, about the low drop rates of the blood stones.

Of course, one stone is D rank, so it would fetch a higher price..

“Did you find out the current price?”

“You didn’t tell me to do that.”

He waved his hand and turned around, as if to say he wasn’t even surprised by this point.

“Yeah, I’m sorry. Find out the current price and say it, please?”

“Yes, Hyung!”

Sang-Min was pressing down on his temple during this time.

After completing the search, Yong-Hyun pressed down some buttons on his handphone, and said, “Hyung! Right now F rank is 20,500 won, and D rank is 70,000 won. All together it’s 316,000 won!

“Yong-Hyun, how many times do I have to say this? Take off the odds and ends and give it to Chang-Hyuk We can just say it’s 300,000 and give everyone 60,000. The municipal rate doesn’t fall down that much.”

As if swallowing a sweet potato the size of an arm, I could sense the frustration.

‘If it was my younger brother, I would tie him up and beat the living daylights out of him.’

Sang-Min looked at me with a contradictory look as he talked to Yong-Hyun.

“We should give a bit more money to the main tanker.. The equipment wear is far worse for them, so we can’t do anything about it. Of course, most parties do this.. It’s fine, right?”

I saw that shield’s life being beaten out of it with my own eyes, so

I could clearly understand the point.

“Ah, right. Let’s hunt together when we have the time. Can I have your phone number?””

“Eh? Ah... I’ll type it.”

*

Kim Min-Cheol

Level : 25

Exp : [34,260/220,000]

Class : Magician

Special Ability : Mana doesn’t run out.

Strength : 10

Mana : ∞

Agility : 10

Vitality : 130

Unspent Points : 0

Current Skills

Frost Orb Lv. 12 [1450/90000]

Lightning Spray Lv.18 [86536/150000]

It was the fifth day of hunting with Sang-Min and his party.

The manticore boss hadn't shown up once, even though we hunted 7 hours each day.

Although we stayed there for 10 hours total, Lee In-Ah, and Jo Yong-Hyun spend 3 hours restoring their mana, so the actual hunting time was less.

Of course, I had to put up an act while they rested. I pretended to need mana restoration time, too.

When our hunting time together was finished, I went to a level 6 dungeon alone.

This was for Skill Exp.

I attracted all the monsters, and killed them all, including the boss.

I could easily tank their attacks, as my vitality stat was at 130.

A 6 level dungeon usually needed a 5 member team of at least Level 10+.

Parties would have tankers and damage dealers, but I did that all on my own.

The amount of time it took for me to move to the boss room was equivalent to the time used to complete a dungeon run.

Every day at 6 am Sang-Min called me.

Aside from my Mother, no one else had given me this much attention. I felt uncomfortable and awkward, but I soon found that someone looking for you was actually a good feeling.

The amount of money I got per day from manticore hunting was around 100-120 million won.

In addition to this, the income from other hunting was around 200,000 won.

I could earn 800 million per week.

But this wasn't enough. I needed more money.

To get that I needed stronger skills, better items, and more growth.

But right now I was completely focused on repaying the loan.

My next objective was to get the skills 'Flashing' and 'Frozen Shield'.

Due to my infinite mana, I could cast 'Lightning Spray' without rest. In order to level up, the skills I needed were not attack skills, but defensive ones.

"Now, let's get to work!"

Chapter 9 - The Taste Of Money! Manticore

(4)

My current level was 25.

I achieved this feat within the first 10 days of the school holidays. Other people had to form parties of 5-6 people to clear particular dungeons, but I could just clear them by myself.

On the surface, it looked like I had a growth rate of 5-6 times faster than normal Awakened, but, in reality, it was at least 10 times faster.

Why? Because I skipped low level dungeons, and went to the high level ones.

Having an ability that eliminates wasting time on mana maintenance is really handy.

Right now I'm doing something that only rich Awakened can do.

On Friday, after I had finished hunting, Sang-Min invited me to join his guild: "Nobless".

According to searches it seemed to be a so-so guild.

It wasn't a large guild, at most it was a middle sized one; one that didn't have any relations to history or tradition.

However, joining a guild like this would only be a dream to others with my level. Adding in the factor of the amount of time I've been an Awakened, it became more outrageous.

Using the guild as a stepping stone to get higher didn't sound like a bad idea.

Joining gave a lot of perks, such as better hunting grounds, loot, items, and information.

But there were 2 rules I was uncomfortable with.

The first was money.

Every week, I had to pay 10% of my income to the guild.

Being sensitive about money, this was the biggest obstacle.

The second, although rarely occurring, was if ever a situation in which the guild had to fight against another one, I would have to join in. Well, even if I did join the battle, only the top 5% would be fighting.

I still had to think about this.

*

Ttumttap-ttumttumttap

Good morning~ Good morning~

It's been a long time since I've woken up to the morning call.

For some reason Sang-Min hadn't called.

"What? Is he sleeping in?"

I called Sang-Min.

After a few rings, he picked up.

"Min-Cheol, what's going on?"

It wasn't a voice that belonged to a person who had just woken up.

I told Sang-Min and his party to talk to me normally.

In-Ah and Yong-Hyun were 23, Sang-Min was 25, and lastly Chang-Hyuk was 30.

"Hello, Hyung. Are we not hunting today?"

"What? Today? Today's Saturday. On Saturdays you should rest."

An uproar. Was he an official?

I wonder so I ask.

"So you don't go hunting on the weekends? None of your party

does?”

“Of course we don’t. We only need to work for 5 days to earn enough money. .. But this guy~~ You’re totally addicted to money now, aren’t you?”

“Haha, it’s not that... Anyway, okay. Have a good rest, Hyung.~”

After ending the call, I realised that what he said made sense.

“Huh, being an Awakened is an occupation too. Except it is rather exclusive.”

Maybe the me who didn’t even think ‘If I have this much money, of course I should rest.’ is an idiot.

Ttak ttak ttak ttak

I felt a presence from the kitchen.

I nervously gathered electricity in one hand, and carefully opened the door.

Through the tiny gap I saw my Mother.

After Grade 2 of Primary School, Mother never stayed home on the weekends.

Weekends, holidays, the dog must've bitten it all off.

A smile unconsciously formed on my face.

“Mother...”

“Did you wake up, son?”

I sometimes saw Mother, at the crack of dawn, making breakfast.

But this time, she was unhurriedly making breakfast, looking peaceful. I wondered if this was true happiness.

The restaurant's kitchen was being remodeled, so she got a two day holiday.

I wanted to skip out on today's hunting, and just eat breakfast and spend time with her.

Suddenly...

BANGBANGBANGBANG!

Are they trying to knock the door down?

It was probably the loan sharks...

They usually came when Mother was at work. Why did they come today?

“Park Se-Ran ssi! Park Se-Ran ssi!!”

They usually came once a month.

I had given them 3 million twice in 10 days, and, having smelt

money, they kept coming as if one day was really far away.

Of course, it wasn't enough to pay back the interest.

Even though I found this quite natural, Mother was surprised.

I heard the men talking outside.

I didn't hear what they were saying, but as soon as they finished conversing.

Kugung!

3 men broke down the front door and came into the house.

"My, my, my. If a visitor comes you should open the door! You know, you can't make your debt go away just by avoiding it, right?"

The guy in the front said, while sticking his head up. I couldn't help but compare him to a dried-up anchovy.

I've seen this guy a couple of times before, when I was home alone.

He's that bastard who kept on swearing and complaining about how there's too much interest backed up. Usually, after complaining, he would leave soon after.

He didn't look like an Awakened, but the two men behind him did. They probably destroyed the door.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I'll pay back the interest no matter what."

"Hey, Park Se-Ran Ssi! It looks like you've found a way to get money. If you have, then you should pay back the interest first. Isn't that right?"

After seeing that bastard tapping on my Mother's shoulders and head with his finger, anger started clouding my brain.

I prepared to shove that fucker away, but...

"G...gah."

The two Awakened behind him suddenly started grabbing my

arms and body.

My limbs were firmly restrained. I couldn't get free no matter how hard I struggled.

‘Fuck! Who the hell are these guys!?’

They were definitely Awakened stronger than me.

“Wow, your son has a really high ambition! Baby, you saw me a lot right? From now on, I'll be seeing you constantly. So we'll definitely meet again.

The bastard said this while tapping my cheek.

Even after Awakening, I still felt rage and humiliation, similar to that which I felt towards Jae-Hyuk.

I started to suspect they came just to scare us. Soon after, dried anchovy goes back.

After he goes out, they stop restraining me. They follow him out.

I gritted my teeth and vowed to get stronger. On the day that I repay the debt, you will die by my hands.

Mother stared at the doorway they walked out of and quietly muttered to herself.

“Those fucking bastards...”

“Hm? What did you say?”

“No, it's nothing.”

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I'm fine.”

“...Mother, are you really okay?”

“Of course! I'm fine. Just eat your breakfast. I made the delicious steamed eggs that you like.”

I don't know whether she's just acting strong in front of me, or she's strong because she's used to this happening.

Whatever her reasons, I can't waste time like this.

In these circumstances, rest was too extravagant. I started getting ready to head to the dungeon again.

As I reached the doorway, my Mother spoke to me: "Son, I can live without money, but I can't live without you. You have to study hard and become a scientist like that Tyson person. I'll make something delicious for dinner, so come back safely, okay?"

I wanted to make a joke, and tell her that 'I was stronger than Tyson right now.', , but for some reason I felt bitter and uncomfortable. Whenever I talked to her, I felt like there was a rock in my stomach.

"Yes, Ms. Park. I'll be back!"

I acted like I didn't remember what had just occurred, and made a humorous face.

My Mother stared at me, and her face blossomed into the world's most beautiful smile.

Not long after I arrive at the dungeon, I noticed that the dungeon entrance looks quite relaxed. I guessed that it was because of the weekends.

It looked like everyone had formed teams with their own guild members and were filling up on their mana, or performing maintenance on their items.

"Hmm... Should I go in alone?"

Chapter 10 - The Taste Of Money! Manticore (5)

I momentarily got lost in thoughts of doubt and hesitation. Thoughts of self-justification slowly crept their way in, too.

Occasionally when I went to hunt monsters with a party, we hunted a few of the nearby Manticores. Before they approached me, I used frost orbs to freeze the wings and legs, and poured electric discharge at them until they died.

No matter how many come, it'll be fine as long as I kill them before they come near me!

That's possible, right?

- Tti-Dik Please scan your card.
- Tti-Dik Please scan your fingerprint.
- The dungeon will now be activated.

I got lost in thoughts again, but before long, I found myself in the dungeon. It appeared I had convinced myself unconsciously.

‘Perhaps I should’ve said I wanted to be a businessman,’ I thought to myself.

I waited until the six person party, that was previously on standby, entered first. As soon as I saw they were gone, I entered.

I was a sophomore in high school, way past being in a sophomore in middle school, yet it seemed I had not completely recovered from the illness.

“At least I received the ‘Boots of Speed’ that Sang-Min used to use.”

The ‘Boots of Speed’ dramatically increased movement speed, so they were usually used by tankers or sub-tankers. Mana mages usually used boots that increased vitality or agility, but I invested all of my stats to vitality, so I figured that speed would be far more efficient and complementary.

“Now, shall I take it for a ride?”

KURURURUNG!

Due to a special nature of Manticores, getting their attention was easy. As long as I made eye contact with one of them, a whole horde would rush over.

Even though this was my first time fighting a mass number of monsters at once, I didn’t find it difficult.

[Experienced earned 600.]

[Experienced earned 600.]

[Experienced earned 600.]

- .
- .
- .

Without much difficulty, I gathered Manticores around me. The hunt had started.

Of course, this was smaller in number in comparison to what we handled in a five people party.

I was disadvantaged, as I didn’t have the buffs or debuffs that Li In-Ah and Jo Young-Hun provided.

With them in my party, it only took two shots to finish off these monsters. By myself, it took 4 to 5 rounds of tries.

Using the money earned from hunting with Sang-Min’s group, I

learned 'Frozen Shield.'

Thanks to it, I could fight the Manticores without taking damage.

Frozen shield was a skill that formed an effective protection layer of ice. It could shield me from enemy attacks for up to three minutes.

It cost 300 mana, and had a cool down of 10 minutes.

I could ignore the mana cost, but the cool down was driving me insane.

I couldn't even dream of purchasing an expensive unlimited-use shield that didn't have any cooling time.

'Frozen Shield' could block most moderate attacks.. However, if the attack strength was twice that of my vitality, then the shield would be destroyed.

Regardless, since Manticores had nowhere near enough attack strength, so, I didn't need to be concerned about it happening.

Once I had enough money, I planned to learn all classes, and all kinds of shield magic. Once I did, I was going to activate my shield at random, without a care for cooling time. It was a solid plan.

While hunting, I started getting excited as I gained experience at a crazy fast rate, and there were many bloodstones floating in mid-air, giving off a luxurious red shine. Instead of sharing with five people, they all went into my own pocket. Moreover, this was despite the fact that my minimum level doesn't even qualify to be in this dungeon.

"To all those trust-fund babies and rich kids, listen up. Become independents. Stop living under the shadow of your parents so shamelessly. Stand by yourself with pride and leave their shadows, just like I did. Face the world, head on. Be reborn!"

I thought that the rich kids and I belonged in different worlds.

However, the ones I used to look at, with eyes soaked with

inferiority, I felt were now below me.

I finished off the last group of monsters, who were in the 3 o'clock direction, and headed to the dungeon's main exit. Everything was going smoothly, until...

I heard a noise.

KUAAAAAANG!!!!

KUAK! KUAK!

“What’s this? Is there a monster left?”

Fearsome howling pierced through the dungeon.

While I was thinking ‘No way, it can’t be.....’

KUWOOOOAH!!

An incredible one suddenly appeared in front of me.

“Is this beginner’s luck? Am I hitting the jackpot?”

It was a Manticore three to four times the size of an ordinary one. It was called Kelvecore.

Its wing and tail were similar to an ordinary Manticore, however it had three heads.

The middle head was an old lion, the left head was a dog, and the right was a dragon.

The heads were all howling and baring their fangs at each other, as if they were fighting for dominance over the body.

“Wow, this really looks like something.....”

Looking at the clock, I still had 15 minutes until the dungeon ended.

If I stayed out of sight for 15 minutes, I could exit the dungeon.

However,

10,000,000.

The money I could get for slaying that monster was 10 million.

“Was this good luck or bad luck? There was no need to think it over. Even if I couldn’t win, I at least had to try.”

Due to all the combat experience and successful kills, I was chock-full of confidence. So, without hesitation, I drew Kelvecore’s attention.

KAAH! KURUNG! KRUUURUNG!

They were busy fighting each other until moments ago, but now, as if they had found a common target, their eyes locked onto me.

‘As long as I tie down their movements, there shouldn’t be much more to it, right?’

KIAP!

With both hands, I concentrated the electric discharge and poured it at them.

CHIRIK! ZIZIZIZIZIZIK!

It hit their heads dead on. However, it didn’t do much damage.

It only made Kelvecore briefly stop, before he resumed flying at me with its swift wings.

Despite this, I didn’t panic. Instead, I aimed for the part where the wings attached to the body, and shot frost orbs. The wings slowly started to freeze over.

Perhaps it was due to realizing its wings were freezing and becoming unresponsive, but the heads charged towards me, going at what seemed like their top speed.

DUGUDUGUDU! DUGUDUGUDU! CRASH!

Due to its charging speed, the frozen wings, which were spread wide open, were torn apart by the air resistance.

“Okay! Now that I’ve stopped its air, I just need to tie up its legs.”

The front legs steered the body, and the rear legs provided

propulsion.

I chose to freeze the rear legs.

When the heads came charging at me, I used the ‘Boots of Speed’ and ran diagonally to the left. This reduced the distance between me and the heads, but it also gave me an angle that would allow me to strike at their rear legs.

TADAK! TADAK! TADAK!

Despite the tremors from the monster’s rapid movements, I managed to perfectly shoot two frost orbs to its rear legs.

The rear legs gradually froze over, and the distance also gradually increased... I had confirmed my victory.

“Frozen Shield.”

Now that I had activated the shield, the only thing left to do was to go all out and kill the bastard.

Holding the rod in both hands, I had just started releasing electric discharge when...

SHAAAACK!!

PUSHOOOOK.

The dragon’s head shout out powerful fire, that hit my left hand, dead on. Soon after, poison needles launched from the tail, and pierced my left shoulder. This was the first blow taken from the monster, and, due to the excruciating pain, I couldn’t think straight.

I had invested all of my stats points to vitality, but one blow from this crazy hidden boss made me helplessly collapse. Because the shield had been pointlessly destroyed by the fire, I ended up allowing a strike on my shoulder.

“Ugh. Ha, Ha... Crazy.....”

The pain in my left arm’s was dominating my body.

My left hand was burned to a crisp. The only thing it maintained was its shape, I couldn't feel or move it.

My sight was gradually becoming blurry.

The monster appeared to have regained feeling in its rear legs, and was starting to charge at me again.

“Kuk, damn it, this crazy little mutt.....”

I wanted to live.

This was a chance that was hard earned. It was a chance for me to be happy. I didn't want to lose this chance; I couldn't lose this chance.

At that moment, I was thinking that 'I could die.' After that thought, I began to feel something emanating within me.

That feeling made me feel as if I was fully dosed in painkillers, and it also made me forget the pain on my left arm for a moment.

Skill casting time doubled in comparison to when I could use both my hands, but I didn't let that bother me.

I used the same method as before! I had decided to use it carefully this time, and focus on precision. Once again I aimed, and shot frost orbs at the rear legs, and the dragon head.

Just in case, I prepared myself for the second round of its tail needle attack.

It was as if my combat senses had spiked due to the threat of immediate death. My field of vision also widened substantially.

Before long I had the monster completely immobilized. I sent twenty electric discharges towards it. I could not make the same mistake twice.

Mistake meant death! To avoid that, I continued to move my body and cast skills.

The dog head lost strength and dropped.

The dragon head was already frozen and broke in half.

The remaining lion head was roaring with murderous intent and stared at me.

And then.

KRUAAAAANG!!!

“So long 10 million.”

.

.

.

My memory ended there.

Chapter 11 - Temptation's Reach

When my consciousness returned, the first thing I saw wasn't the hospital or the association office branch.

Just atop a normal household bed.

However it wasn't just a normal looking house, but a house so extravagant that it would make your jaws drop.

My last memory was that of defeating kelvecore. Thus, my relief for being alive was short.

I let out a sigh, thinking about how my body would be crippled from the injuries.

“Hm? What the... this situation.”

My left hand that was burnt black and couldn't even move.

The poisonous stinger as big my upper arm that was imbedded in my shoulder, gone without a scratch.

After repeatedly moving my left arm, I confirmed that it was real.

Without feeling any pain, my left arm was like it was before the attack on me.

‘[Damn](#). I thought I died. Of course.’

[TN: The original sentence says ‘Damn. I thought I lived. Of course.’, we have no idea either.]

I sensed a presence from outside and a door the size of my room slid open.

“Did you wake up?”

It was a beauty.

As she was speaking to me, she showed a beautiful smile.

How could this happen?

My mind was blown away.

I asked out of reflex, “How did this happen? Where is... here?”

Instead of answering, with her white finger, she poked my left arm.

As I flinched, she then asked, “Does your arm move well? With this much, wouldn’t even [Heo Jun](#) would cry at my skill?”

[TN: Heo Jun is a renowned surgeon who was a miracle worker in surgery.]

Without replying, I waited for the answer to my question.

Noticing my look, she continued her words.

“I brought you over after I found you collapsed in front of the 12th dungeon portal. Not even considering the burnt left hand, just the poison in your body would have been enough to kill you.”

“Thank you very much. I am in your debt.”

She smiled with a look in her eyes that could make people fall for her. She extended her hand for a handshake.

“My introduction was late. Nice to meet you. I am Noblesse’s guild master Park Hyun. You are Min-Cheol, right? You are the super Rookie that Sangmin has an eye on!”

Is this some kind of incredible fate? The talk that continued with her was like this.

Sangmin talked a lot about me to the guild.

“There is a little fearless kid who goes into the level 12th dungeon every single day. The brat’s combat sense rose at a scary rate, his eyes are filled with the desire for something.”

After the call with me this morning, Sangmin called the guild master Park Hyun.

‘If you want to meet that person directly, go to the level 12th dungeon.’

Out of curiosity, Park Hyun went to the dungeon personally, and with pure luck, I survived.

So I started to understand what occurred.

Park Hyun's class was healer. The skill that she healed me with, it wasn't like the skill that In-Ah used that healed my health, but a skill that cured my status debuffs.

It was one of the highest skill for a healer that can be used on those that was still alive and Awakened.

Its effect is to return the receiver to the previous state before they received the injury.

The skill's cool down time is 24 hours. If that skill wasn't available at the time, wouldn't I be dead?

Park Hyun's hand moved to the drawer underneath the bed.

All my belongings were there. Even when I was about to die, I still brought out the loots.

'Man, even if I can only use one hand, why did I bring out the \$40 staff with me...'

The first thing that I noticed was the Manticore's Soul Stone that I risked my life for. That, and the level C blood stone the size of my fist.

"...My life's worth [100 million won](#)."

[TN: Around \$85,000. The original text says 1 million won. Author pls.]

To my serious monologue, she only watched.

'But, what is this?'

Next to the Soul Stone, there was a small gem, and underneath that, there was a book.

"Don't you remember? With your right hand, you held onto the staff, the jewel, the Soul Stone, and the blood stone with all your

might... And that skill book you held under your armpit.”

“Did I really do that? Haha...”

I tried my best to smile, but my face became red from embarrassment. I couldn't remember anything. But it was completely something I would do.

“Yes! You were holding onto it so tightly, that I had to break your wrist and your shoulder. Only then did you let it go. I also had to break a few fingers too.”

She said those words with a smile without any concern.

‘...’

Suddenly, all the pain in my right arm that I couldn't understand started to make sense.

It was then.

With an expression that I couldn't see before, she asked with seriousness.

“What's the reason?”

“Huh?”

“What's the reason why you're trying to become strong?”

For a while without words, I fiddled around with the Soul Stone. The reason for becoming strong, huh...

A simple reason would be money, as that's the only thing that moves me. But before that, isn't there something I want to protect? The only way I could do that would be money.

I answered seriously.

“There is something I want to protect. To protect that, I must become stronger.”

Park Hyun did not ask any more questions. She looked into my eyes, then with the same smile from before, she spoke again.

“I see. Do you have any thoughts of joining our guild?”

“Is that the payment for saving my life?”

“That’s not it. I just went to see you and happened to save you.”

“I heard from Sangmin-hyung before, but I didn’t get to consider it yet since I was occupied. But I don’t want to let you slip away. Perhaps is there a condition you want?”

I don’t know the reason, but it seems that she really wanted me to join her guild. Even asking if I had any conditions. While I was hesitating, Park Hyun spoke first.

“The 10% sharing, I won’t ask for it from you. Also, instead of that fake staff, I’ll give you something amazing. How about it? Isn’t this a really great deal?”

“...”

That’s weird, does she know about my ability?

How did she know that my equipment was fake?

Did she find out while she was saving me?

However, offering a level 25 Awakened with this kind of deal, even for someone new to guild, I could not understand.

What is she hiding?

After seeing my face in serious contemplation, she spoke again.

“You don’t have to give me an answer right now, I’ll give you time to think about it.”

I felt suspicious, but there was no reason to decline.

There was nothing that would harm me with the conditions attached to the deal.

While accepting the invite, if I find anything weird, I could still decline then.

When Sangmin-hyung invited me, I already had thoughts of

entering the guild.

The problem was I had to decide quicker than I thought I had to.

‘I’ll think about the consequences later.’

I decided to accept Park Hyun’s offer.

“No, I will accept that offer now.”

With a content look, she spoke, “Then I’ll see you at the front gate in 30 minutes. I placed some clothes that you could change into over there.”

“I understand.”

After she left, my gaze naturally fell on the skill book.

I downloaded the phone app Skill Books Index that she told me about.

It contained dungeon entry level requirements, monsters, required party members for successful clears, and other useful information.

I was the only one who didn’t know there was such an easy and useful app.

While regretting, I scanned the skill book with my phone.

Click.

Chapter 12 - Temptation's Reach (2)

The skill book that I scanned using the app was named Eye of the Storm.

-Eye Of The Storm-

Class: Magician, Enchanter (If obtained by other classes, mana cost increases tenfold) Mana Cost: 200 (Mana cost increased by 10% per 10 levels)

Skill Introduction:

- With the user as the center, draws in all monsters within 20m in a circle
- Enemies hit by the 'Eye of the Storm' become stunned
- Cannot be used on (???)lv bosses

Cooldown: 15 minutes

Duration: 5 seconds. (Duration increases by 10% per 10 levels)

Skill Rank: F

Additonal Explanation: Has synergy effect with "Typhoon Hole" skill

Skill book sale price: 30,000,000 won (\$26,000)

"It's on the level of a dictionary?"

"Wait... If another class uses it, the mana cost is ten times?"

It is. The entire time I was hunting, I've never seen a Healer or a Necromancer uses skill that was of a different class.

When you use a skill that was not of your class, a ridiculous

amount of mana would be consumed.

“Oh boy... This is insane, I think this is a big deal?”

So in this case, as long as I have the money, I could use any skill I wanted without restrictions.

It felt like I was a second tier of the Awakened.

While I was lost in my catharsis, I noticed the price of the book.

“I’m tired of even cursing. 30 million won? My goodness.”

For an offensive skill book, 30 million won was on the cheaper side.

However, for me, it was a price that was ridiculous.

If I think about it, the hunt for the kelvecore was a hunt that was worth risking my life for.

With just the Soul Stone and the skill book, my earning was 130 million won! (\$110,000) The jewel that Park Hyun spoke about, I have no idea how much it is worth.

In one day! With one lucky hunt, I was able to make a huge amount of money.

Without a second of hesitation, I learned the Eye of the Storm skill.

With my Lightning Spray, there is no better synergy.

It was a skill that would synergize well with any kind of AoE, actually.

More than the 30 million won, I was looking forward to getting 300 million won, 3 billion won, even 30 billion won.

“Skill rank? What’s that...?”

I pressed on the skill rank.

Depending on the skill’s destructive power, the skill’s ranking was split between S~F.

For defensive spells such as shield, the rank was based upon how much protection it provided.

“Of course it’s going to be an F skill, it’s not an offensive skill but rather a support skill... And my Lightning Spray skill is ranked C? What...? I thought it was a rather strong skill.”

I changed into the blackened, blood stained clothes and left Park Hyun’s house.

She was having a phone call with someone while waiting.

There were many escorting cars in front and behind the car we were riding in.

This level was that of presidential or high ranking personnel escorts.

I thought it was just a decent guild... I guess was wrong in a good way.

As she got into the car, I asked, “Where are we going?”

“We have to fill out the guild application form. There is also something else that I would like to do.”

She answered with a peaceful smile.

The place that we arrived at after an hour long car ride was the Noblesse’s guild building.

While I had expectations, the size was much greater than I expected.

‘This size is for a guild that’s only in the middle ranking...?’

There was something hidden within that smile of hers.

Before being Awakened, I wanted just a single spot in one of these big buildings.

Since I was desperate to get a job to work.

Now? It’s more ‘That one high rise building can be mine!’ kind of level.

After going through the entrance, there were countless people greeting Park Hyun.

With a simple reply, she responded and walked quickly past them.

It was then that I truly realize this one woman was the master of a guild.

The place that she took me was the 15th floor, the Stone Workshop.

When the elevator door opened, the place before me was completely different from the lobby.

In the center was a humongous sized furnace that took my attention.

‘Is this complying with the construction laws?’ I thought with pointless concern.

—Metal struck noise—

Everywhere, I heard the sound of molten metal being struck.

After walking through, her steps stopped in front of an old man.

Then, with a higher level of respect, she greeted.

“How are you doing, advisor?”

“Aha~ Who is this? Our young leader has arrived? What’s the occasion?”

It seemed that he ate kimchi for dinner.

Hearing the rough voice of the old man, it felt as though my throat was hurting.

The old man stopped what he was doing and greeted Park Hyun.

“There was something that I wanted to ask of you. I feel sorry every single time.”

“Hahahaha! Would there be any other reason to come see an old

man like me? What is it? Before I draw my last breath, quickly, tell me.”

Hearing that voice, ‘It seemed like he’s really going to breathe his last breath, so talk quickly!’

As if hearing my thoughts, Park Hyun spoke.

“I wanted one staff for a magician.”

“Haha, that’s disappointing, there are so many staffs anywhere, what kind of a request is this?”

“Hm... not a C ranked, but a half A rank please.”

“Half A rank? Something so rare, is this guy going to be the one using it?”

The old man spoke while pointing his red hammer at me.

Despite his age, his muscular arm made me flinch.

Seeing that spectacle, Park Hyun went ‘kuu’ before continuing to speak.

“You’ll do it, huh?”

“Sure! All I’ll have to do is just hammer away anyway.”

The old man accepted Park Hyun’s request with enthusiasm.

After the greeting was finished, I asked her.

“What’s a C rank, and what’s a half A rank?”

“We’re talking about the rank of the weapon, depending on the blood stone, the weapon’s rank changes. Weapons and armors can be obtained outside of hunting. Just like it says, C rank weapons are made from C ranked stones, half A rank weapons are made from half of a B rank and half an A rank stone.”

I could not hide my surprise that they could craft weapons.

The old man advisor’s class was a blacksmith.

Other than the crafting skill obtained at level 1, a blacksmith

would not get any skill book or item for their class.

Also, surprisingly, they could obtain experience points without fighting monsters to level.

The only way they could raise their level and skill level was to hammer away at a blood stone.

‘You can earn money, but it must be a very mundane life.’

As told by Park Hyun, the elder advisor was not the highest level amongst the Noblesse guild’s blacksmith members.

However, he could craft weapons that were better than blacksmiths of a higher level as he had talents beyond just his class.

While I was heading to her office on the 60th floor.

‘Damn!’

Chapter 13 - Temptation's Reach (3)

‘Damn! He said that it was a staff for magicians?’

With the excuse that I have to use the bathroom, I went to the old man as fast as I could.

“Advisor... no, [Advisor](#), is it possible that you could make not just staffs but weapons for warriors?”

He uses a more respectful way of saying advisor the second time.

“If I could make white rice, don’t you think I could make black rice, too?”

While talking, the old man’s hammering did not stop.

Hearing the old man’s words, I wanted to say ‘Hurray for the black smith!’

While hiding my excitement, I continued the conversation.

“Then, could you possibly make a sword instead of a staff?”

Hearing my words, the old man stopped his hammering and looked at me with an exasperated expression.

“What kind of nonsense are you talking about? Aren’t you a Magician? Why do you want something that you can’t even use? If I make something wrong for you, I’d get in trouble with the young leader!”

“Please. I’ll take responsibility for it, make it into a sword!”

Even while repeatedly rejecting my request, I kept asking the old man.

Maybe becoming tired of my constant pestering, he spoke without strength in his voice.

“A greenhorn like you, why so stubborn? Alright, fine, but don’t regret it!”

“Thank you. Thank you. Also, this...”

I gave the blood stone that I earned from the kelvecore to the old man.

“You want to embed this into the sword?”

“Yes. Please!”

“Don’t you have one more? The sword I’m making will have two embedded in.”

“I only have one, if I get another one, I’ll ask again.”

“You’re an annoying one huh. Alright, go away!”

“Yes, thank you very much!”

To the advisor grandpa, I requested something like ‘a hot cold Americano.’

I found out that the jewel I gave him was a Strength +30 stone that was used for weapons.

I didn’t know about the cost or the rank, but it was something that I risked my life for. So I wanted to use it for myself.

I was told that the weapon would take roughly one month’s time.

I returned to Park Hyun’s office on the 60th floor.

I carefully read the guild’s request form for I was suspicious of how for someone that was recently Awakened to be treated like this.

For the parts that I didn’t understand, Park Hyun explained them to me.

As we continued, of course, I recorded everything.

After finishing the guild registration, I said that I will return in a month’s time to receive the staff and then proceeded to return home.

-Skills sound effects.-

[Gained 600 exp.]

[Gained 600 exp.]

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Only in 10 minutes, I was able to clear the level 12th dungeon by myself.

It was only possible due to the combination of ‘Eye of the Storm’ and ‘Lightning Spray.’

Of course, due to the ‘Eye of the Storm’ cooldown time, I needed to take 5 minutes breaks.

Using that break time, I continued to sell the drops.

I felt bad for Sangmin-hyung whom I hunted with. But there was no reason to suffer losses and hunt together.

Because now I wasn’t just looking at the level 12th dungeons but rather dungeons beyond it.

Before I knew it, time passed and it was nearly August.

Tomorrow, I return to school.

During the long but short summer break, I was able to grow at a rate that no one could imagine.

Level: 57

Exp: [19,254,800/22,884,590] 84%

Class: Magician

Special Attribute: Infinite Mana

Strength: 160

Mana: ∞

Agility: 10

Stamina: 140

Points to distribute: 0

Learned skills

Frost Orb: Lv. 21 [16,244/180,000]

Lightning Spray: Lv. 38 [128,456/350,000]

Eye of the Storm: Lv.20 [88,243/170,000]

Frozen Shield: Lv. 17 [338/140,000]

Hunting more than 12 hours a day, my level finally became 57.

For a normal Awakened, no matter how fast you went, it was a result that would require over a year.

And the difference would only increase the higher I go.

After level 20, the experience required to level up rose by 1 million per level.

However, after level 30, the rate of the increase became ridiculous.

It was almost like it was meant to weed out the weak-willed.

Despite this misfortune, at least the experience required to level up your skill didn't increase dramatically.

If that was the case, then the time one would be stuck in one place would be much longer.

Even if, compared to other people, it would have been much quicker for me.

For offensive type skills, leveling the skill wasn't that difficult.

For shield skills, one needed to be hit to receive experience, so it was very difficult.

If I had lots of money, I would have continuously used a variety of shields on rotation to increase my skill experience, but for now, it was too difficult.

I didn't concentrate on the debt I owed but saved all my money to obtain skill books.

The skill I was trying to purchase was a ridiculous one.

Level 12? No, I was preparing for something beyond level 13.

15 days after visiting the Noblesse guild, I received word from the advisor grandpa.

With confidence, I went into the 15th floor of the guild to receive my sword.

However, the one who brought the sword to my house was not Park Hyun but a trainee secretary.

Although weapons had S~F rank attached to it, the weapon's rank was not only determined by the blood stone's level.

The ranking was also determined by the Awakened's ability.

To use the weapon that was crafted, you needed to meet the stats requirements for it.

Depending on the rank of the stone that was used, the required stats would be determined.

The stats that were implemented on a weapon or armor was not done by strength, mana, agility, or stamina specific stones, but made with a blood stone.

Hence, the required stats to use the equipment will be changed based on the grade of the stone embedded in the equipment.⁵

The warrior class sword that I received was a half A rank, which required 200 points in strength to use.

Because I did not have enough strength stats, no matter how hard I tried, I could not lift the light looking sword.

Thus, without any choice, I had to request Park Hyun's secretary to help me bring it home.

Thankfully, nothing was said about how it was not a staff but a

sword.

Sword or staff, it was something that I requested for.

In front of me, there is a sword that I can't even use.

It was one of the mid to high ranking sword mankind could craft, yet it was like a rice cake in a picture.

After receiving the sword, I put all my level up points into strength because there was a reason to use that sword.

-Ringing sound.-

“Uwa...”

The day began with an energetic morning call.

However, for hunting, a depressing morning began different from waking up.

After washing, I ate the breakfast that my mother made.

If I could, I would quit school and live solely in the hunting zones.

The chance which one can Awaken was highest between the age of 15~19.

In a regular school, the Awakened and the Non-Awakened with the possibility of being Awakened were taught in the same classes.

The goal of the school was to teach both the Awakened and Non-Awakened together.

For our modern day society, the danger of monster invasions and exploding portals were important, but at the same time, they also felt a threat from the Awakened.

Once it is determined that the student is an Awakened, it is reported to the Council as well.

Thus one becomes a special case.

You were an asset to the nation but were also capable of becoming a criminal at the same time.

If an Awakened causes issues in school or society, the punishment they received were far greater than normal people.

However, for increasing your social skill and attending normal school without any issues, upon graduating, you'd receive a guild recommendation and a waiver for education cost.

For the Awakened, the cost of education was nothing.

But, the guild recommendation was an award that would excite the eyes of the Awakened.

The Awakened had complaints about the current society.

What they wanted was the strong devour the weak, that the Awakened is superior to the Non-Awakened.

And that the lower Non-Awakened should be controlled by the Awakened.

Simply put, they wanted a caste system.

They didn't group up to rally or fought over power, and they were not in sight, but they were everywhere.

However, incidents that occurred once in a while gave fear to the Non-Awakened about the Awakened.

One of the incidents involved terrorist attack on the Central Plants Center.

Six years ago, it wasn't an exaggeration to call the Plant that they blew up the place that sustained all of humanity.

Due to the importance of the Plants, there were many Awakened guards.

However, it was caused by one person.

“Oh shit! Terrorism or not, I'm going to be late!”

Nothing seemed to have changed when I arrived back at the school.

The school entrance, the hill side roads, the classes, everything was the same.

With many thoughts in mind, I entered the classroom, and suddenly.

“Hey, pip squeak! Did you spend your days well? Go get me some sausage bread and soda.”

-Coin dropping on table sound.-

Chapter 14 - To Higher Places

-Coin dropping on table.-

The 500 won that Jae-Hyuk threw was spinning on top of the table.

He looked pathetic.

“Do you want to get beaten up again? What kind of look is that, asshole!”

It seemed that nothing has changed.

‘...I forgot to bring my nail clipper today! It was a mistake that would leave a great regret in my life. There was one that I received from the advisor grandpa...’

It was then.

-Punch.-

Jae-Hyuk’s fist flew and hit me right in the chest.

“Aren’t you out of it?”

With his cursing and punching, it got everyone’s attention.

I quietly shook my head.

Fainted? No, it didn’t hurt at all! Actually, it felt rather pleasant.

All the things that waste did, all of it came back to me one by one.

Firstly, with his one punch, I was sure, that this person’s level is roughly about 40 since it has only been a year since he Awakened.

Even if he was a warrior class Awakened, he could not raise only his strength in the beginning.

It seemed that, in the beginning he raised his stamina and only after spring break started to put points into strength.

If that was the case, then it shouldn’t even be 50 points.

If a normal person was hit with it, they would most likely

instantly die on the spot.

But this trash, he threw his punch really well.

I was actually thankful, the thought of giving him a bit of mercy just went poof.

‘This waste is now dead meat! Kuku, bastard, you better start asking for forgiveness!’

I turned my head and looked at him without being noticed by everyone else.

Out of my 18 years of life, this is the first time that I smiled a little.

The moment he saw that, he continued cursing and throwing another punch at me.

Then.

-Hand grabbing fist sound.-

With minimum effort, I easily grabbed the punch.

“Wha-what the? Let me go! Bastard! Shit!”

It seemed as though he was extremely shocked that his right hand was caught. He was giving it his all to try to regain his hand.

Those who were only spectating all had expressions of confusion.

Other than the trash Hwang Jae-Hyuk, I did not rage or lament at the rest of my classmates.

If I was in their shoes, I would only be a spectator as well.

‘Yes, it seems for today, I need to be a blue pen teacher for this guy.’

As I finished my thought, I laughed, looking straight into Jae-Hyuk’s eyes.

-Evilly smiling sound effect.-

Then.

-Punch.-

“Ka.”

-Ruckus from tables falling over.-

While letting go of Jae-Hyuk's hand, I threw my fist into his chest.

Then, he instantly fell over.

“To the weak, you are strong, but to the strong, you are weak.”

I spoke while sitting atop of Jae-Hyuk.

“Those.”

-Punch.-

“Waste of people.”

-Punch.-

“Is why this world is shitty. Asshole.”

-Punch.-

I threw another punch into his chest.

The sudden rage towards him overlapped with the rage I had against the debt collectors.

-Panting from pain.-

I had placed 160 points into strength.

Every time I punched Jae-Hyuk, he screamed at the top of his lungs.

Despite that, he seem to have his pride, and looked towards the crowd.

My rage that was released, it was as if a dam had burst opened.

“It hurts, doesn't it? But you won't die quickly, and you won't bleed. Why? Because your stamina is great, isn't it?”

-Slap.-

Now I flattened out my hand and struck his cheek.

One more.

-Slap.-

“Ugh! This bastard!!!! I will kill you!!!”

It seemed that after being struck in the face, he felt embarrassment, and thus he tried to struggle with all his might.

However.

To make sure that he could not move, I was pinning both his arms with my legs and he could only flail about uselessly.

“I guess you could take more hits? That’s right, that way I don’t feel guilty as I hit you. Please, struggle more!”

-More punching and slapping.-

Other than his cheeks, I hit him on the body where it wouldn’t show.

After that, he raised his upper body and slowly tried to talk.

“Pant. Pant. You bastard. You’re not going to get away with this.”

‘This guy, only his mouth is still alive.’

Even though he was a person who was still alive, a scent of rotting decay emanated from him.

I did not want to hear a single word from this waste.

Finishing my thought, I took another step towards the talking man.

-Foot steps.-

“Do you know who I am? I am a Noblesse guild member... Shit, shit, don’t come closer!”

As I came closer, he stopped talking and trembled.

Oho? A Noblesse guild member? ‘Welcome, my brother!’

Then.

-Lightning flash.-

I raised my hand.

“Ee-EEK! Do-don’t come closer!”

As I raised my hand, he violently trembled.

Looking at him, I started to laugh.

And then, I lowered my hand and gently stroke his head.

“Class is going to start. Today’s not the only day we can settle this, right? Jae-Hyuk?”

Hearing my words, Jae-Hyuk shook with rage before running away out of the classroom.

The classmates around me, all looked at me with worry, thinking, ‘Is this a new devil that has appeared?’

To them, I said.

“I don’t blame any of you! I would have done the same thing you guys did. But did you know? That the scariest thing in the world is not trash like Jae-Hyuk, but those who are silent!?”

‘Wow, I’m really cool! This is why all the girls fall for me! Tonight, if I do really well in bed, I feel like this would be the best moment in my life!’

It was a line that I was proud of. I hope I don’t remember this in the future...

-Bell ringing.-

The bell that signified the first class after summer break rang.

As soon as the teacher entered, I raised my hand and said.

“Teacher, Jae-Hyuk went to the restroom!”

After that, Jae-Hyuk did not return to school for over a week. He

must have been very embarrassed...

Oh well, it didn't matter. I could hear how he's doing through master Park Hyun.

He was working hard learning strategies about the level 12th dungeon.

Any time that I wanted to bully him, I could simply go over and bully him.

After that incident, I became a super star at school.

Out of the 1000 students, only 3 became Awakened, and one of those was me.

And I had an incredible growth rate during the summer break, taking the highest ranking for myself.

I used to look down upon Jae-Hyuk who slept in school all day, but I became just like him.

If it wasn't education that was required by the nation, I would have escape and go hunt in the hunting zones.

From 5PM to 5AM, I stayed in the hunting zones.

I could not give up my 12 hours of hunting a day.

Because I did not have any down time, I was able to hunt 3-4 hours more than the average Awakened.

And because of that, yesterday, I reached level 61.

With all the money that I earned, I was able to purchase a skull ring, a skill book and was now leaving the market.

After waiting for four days since I ordered, I was finally able to receive the ring.

It was a very popular ring.

This ring had strength +20.

The 20 strength was nearly 25,000,000 won.

Of course, if I counted it in levels, it was a 4 levels difference.

However, something more surprising than that, was the cost of the skill book.

Even though it was only a warrior class skill book, it was 120,000,000 won.

A ridiculous price if I say so myself.

To get to the higher level dungeons, it was a choice I had to make.

Two days ago, to make sure the debt collectors couldn't say a thing, I gave them 100,000,000 won.

It was a warning to not bother us for the time being.

If I kept growing at this rate, then I guess I would have to worry about if I should dip the anchovy in soy sauce or hot sauce.

I had no thoughts of paying off the rest of the debt, maybe the cost for reparation after I crush them.

With that thought, I also thought that I needed to convince my mother...

Chapter 15 - To Higher Places (2)

-Piercing Sword-

Class: Warrior, a person of great strength, Assassin (If another class obtains it, mana cost increases tenfold.)

Mana Cost: 10% of total mana (Mana cost does not increase even if skill level rises.)

Skill Introduction:

-Equipped weapon radiates from the body and pierces all enemies within 5 meters.

-As skill level rises, range and power increases.

-Only hits target the caster considers hostile.

Cooldown: None.

Duration: 10 seconds.

Skill Rank: B

Additional Explanation: None.

Skill Book Cost: 120,000,000 won

It was the information of a 120,000,000 won skill.

It was a skill that consumed 10% of your mana, which was suited for warriors.

For other classes, 10 times that cost would be 100%.

So even if you had 1000~2000 mana stat, you could only use it once.

However, does it matter?

It was now time to graduate from the level 12th dungeon.

There was also a reason why I placed all my points into strength and received a sword for warriors.

After level 12th dungeon, magic attacks would not be effective between level 13th to level 15th dungeon.

The monsters have magic resistance.

It was a ridiculous situation since all magician classes would have to receive assistance from the guild or pay money and beg.

To get that amount of money, they would have to farm the level 12th dungeon and waste an enormous amount of time doing so.

Since it was impossible to grow stronger and it was also impossible to go on to the higher level dungeons.

However, there was nothing to be upset about, because from level 16th to level 18th, physical attacks do not work.

‘It was better to get punished first’ or something other?

Dungeons after that, there was magic and physical resistance rotating every 3 levels.

You had to continue begging and you had to continue receiving favors.

However, I’m going to do it all by myself.

That’s why I got the stats and skills.

At first, I was surprised at the level requirement difference between level 6th and 12th dungeon.

However, compared to the dungeons that I’m going to be clearing, it was nothing.

The level 12th dungeon requirement was 5 people level 45 or higher. For the level 13th dungeon requirement, it was 5 people level 65 or higher.

Just with the increase of a single level for the dungeon, each Awakened had to increase their level by 20.

If you add them up together, it was an increase of 100 levels.

If what I learned is correct, each year, there is another portal. With that portal, are stronger monsters to match it and a dungeon to prevent the portal from exploding. This has continued on for 40 years.

Each year, the monsters grew an incredible amount in strength.

And to cover up that gap in power, there must have been countless Awakened that were sacrificed to prevent the portals from exploding.

Before I went to the dungeon, I headed home.

“This honorable sword that has been passed down through generations! I will now receive it!!! Dun dun dun!”

I grabbed the sword with both hands, kneeling down on the ground while playing a BGM.

All those levels I gained and with the assistance of the skull ring, I was able to hit strength 200.

A sword that used to not budge no matter how hard I tried, now moves as if it was as light as a blade of grass.

A sword as dark as night, although in my room there was light, however, there was no outline or reflection on the sword.

I put the sword on my hand and it seemed to measure about 7cm wide.

It was as if the sword was eroding away the surrounding color, as if to say I will absorb all the light in the world.

The sword was over one meter long and it looked to be a traditional Korean sword.

Out of all the choices the advisor grandpa showed me, this one

was the one I picked.

The weapons and armors that the blacksmith could make, there were many options, shapes, and types.

On the handle, a jewel was embedded.

If the weapon was obtained from a boss or a hidden monster, it would have a name.

However, this weapon that I received from the grandpa did not have a name.

Since it was going to be the ticket to my wealth for a while, it needed a name.

“Hm. Black... big and beautiful... No, not like this, it can't be!”

I had to get rid of the thought of a giant monster in my head and name my sword.

“Yes, I'll just name it [Heugdo](#)!”

Literally translate to black sword.

The moment I held the sword, my strength stat changed.

With the skull ring, I was able to reach 200 points in strength, then I gained 30 points of strength from the jewel as well as 10% of the 200 strength I originally had from the Special Attribute of the sword.

The advisor grandpa said that this was one of the highest traits that you could earn from a half A sword using a blacksmith's crafting skill.

With a godlike 200 points in strength, I was instantly able to [go over double](#) that.³

180 base stat, 20 skull ring, 30 jewel, 200 stat from sword, 10% of all that = 43. Total 473

‘Ha...Amateurs are all about equipment, my shoulders are getting heavy?’

While carrying the sword, I left the house.

The place I arrived at was not the 13th level dungeon but the level 12th dungeon.

-Entering dungeon sound.-

As I entered the dungeon, I raised my sword and shouted.

“A multicolored rose shines its light!”

I pulled out my two rose knives within the wind wall as if pulling out Excalibur.

The Heugdo that was supposed to be in my hands was nowhere to be seen, but instead I had two rose kitchen knives.

The reason for that was to raise my skill before entering the level 13th dungeon.

No matter how much you raise the mana stats, it does not affect a skill's destructive power.

However, strength raises the destructive power of physical skills.

With weak strength that would not kill the monster, I had to use Piercing Sword as many times as possible to get the most experience.

While others were trying to become stronger, I was aiming to be weaker.

The reason was not because I was trying to cover up for the missing 20 strength from the skull ring.

My base stat was 180 strength. With this much, it was not very low.

However, looking at the manticore's defense ability, it seemed that before level 10 with Piercing Sword, it could receive at least 5 times of the attack.

I ran about and aggro'd 200 manticores.

Out of habit, I almost used Eye of the Storm.

The Eye of the Storm duration became 6 seconds since it rose over level 20.

However, the new skill, Piercing Sword, was 10 seconds longer.

It wasn't very effective to use if I wanted to avoid the manticore's attacks.

"Wait, did I just think that I was going to avoid their attacks? Shudders."

I went towards the center of the gathering manticores.

Grr, grr!

I casted Frozen Shield and waited until they came closer to me.

The ones in my immediate vicinity, the front line, were swinging their sharp claws.

The sound of the shattering of the Frozen Shield almost caused me to tremble.

Now!

-Sword piercing enemies sounds.-

The rose knives that received my 180 strength were able to defend against all manticore attacks.

At the same time, all manticores within 5m, the rose knives were able to repeatedly go through them.

'Ah! How could I forget? Since I'm a magician, I could use it with both my hands.'

From within my body, rose knives started to pour out. Of course, twice the amount a warrior class would be able to use.

-Stabbing sounds.-

It seems as though a B rank skill that was not affected by the type of weapon that was used.

Chapter 16 - To Higher Places (3)

Ending the ‘cooking time with rose knives manticore edition,’ it was time to return the knives to the kitchen.

Within just one day, Piercing Sword’s skill became 21.

Since countless knives hit the monsters multiple times with each hit equaling 1 point of skill exp, it was possible to level this skill much faster than other skills.

When I finished my last hunting, the time was 4:30 A.M.

Around the dungeon, only food stores serving through dawn had their lights on.

Dungeons were around areas of low populace, yet these stores went out of their way to establish here.

Those inside protecting their spots, most of them probably are Awakened.

“Should I take a bowl of rice soup before I go?”

I was about to go into a store because I was hungry.

However, nearly everyone within the store was receiving a phone call and was readying up to leave.

“What the? Did the store close?”

-Phone ringing sound.-

I had a bad feeling about this.

People who received the phone call were moving with haste... And following that, a phone call for me.

“Hello?”

“Are you Min-Cheol?”

“Who is this?”

“It’s the ‘Korea Awakened Association’.”

“What’s the occasion?”

“Using GPS, we’ve detected symptoms of a portal’s explosion within 5km of you. From the vibration’s intensity, it is predicted to be a level 13th to 15th portal’s explosion. Until the association arrives, we’re asking assistance from any nearby Awakened. Perhaps could you go as well?”

“Sorry but since this is the first time I’ve experienced something like this, do I have to go? And how did you find out my location?”

“No. You don’t have to... but we’ll reward you depending on how much you’ve helped. The location was pinpointed using your Awakened ID.”

‘Does the ID have a location tracker? Terrifying, but was a reward mentioned?’

“What’s the reward?”

Within less than one minute since the call began, everyone within the store had left.

“Yes, out of the monsters pouring out of the portal, the one who kills the boss monster will receive an award matching the difficulty of the boss.”

“A lot people will gather to fight that boss. How will you know who killed it?”

“Unlike the dungeon, monsters that come out of the portal give the rights to the drops to the one who does the most damage. That’s how we’ll determine it.”

‘Oho... Seems pretty good.’

The bad feeling I had when the call came changed to an opportunity for me.

I always obtained the dungeon information ahead of time, preparing the necessary weapons and stats, but I have never actually fought against a real monster.

If what this call told me was true, it would be a good opportunity to obtain real combat experience as well as a reward.

As I thought for a bit, I heard the association employee's voice again.

"Ah, I apologize. Min-Cheol is a magician class. There must have been some kind of error. My apologies. Then I'll be off."

"Wait! I'll go. If anything like this happens again, please contact me!"

"Eh? Well if you say so, I'll send the GPS information for now."

"Yes, thank you very much!"

If it is a monster from level 13th to 15th, magic attacks would not work so there was no need for the association to contact me.

But I'm not a magician! A warrior? Since I was closest to a spellword, I could not be unhappy about this call.

'5km... My chance increases the faster I get there....'

My heart raced as I looked at the information on the GPS.

At that time, I noticed a man pulling out his car from the restaurant's parking lot and stepping on the pedal.

'Okay. That's it.'

To make sure he saw me, I blocked the way and waved.

-Honking sounds and sly comment about a certain webcomic.-

The man honked the horn and yelled with urgency.

"Move out of the way! I'm in a hurry!!!"

As soon as the car stopped dead in front of me, I hastily approached the car.

"If you received the call from the association and heading over, can I come with?"

"Shit! Warrior? Assassin? Without a weapon, where do you think

you're going! I'm busy so get out of my way!"

"..."

The man yelled at me with greater urgency after seeing me hanging onto the window without a word.

"Damn it! I have no luck at all. Time is wasting, so hurry up and get in! Quickly, get in!"

It was good that I got a free ride, but I could not look to my side.

The first thing I saw as soon as I got in was... to simplify, was fashion terrorism.

He wore a white hat, V-neck t-shirt, blue jeans with chain shackles, a skull shaped necklace, and to add onto the fire, white heels.

Just looking at him once, I felt my eyesight deteriorate.

I almost wanted to say, 'Perhaps, an Awakened who is a curse user?'

'Where do they sell clothes like this? Perhaps he bought it with money? Did he steal from a used clothing store?'

5km was a close distance, but since it was a road up the mountain, I had to wait for a long time.

After a period of silence, the man who wanted to leave in a hurry spoke first.

"You an Awakened? Your age?"

'Speaking without honorifics? Should I give him a taste of my Lightning Spray for desert?'

From fashion to the way he spoke, I could not find anything likable.

"18, magician."

"A student? Why would a magician go near the portal's explosion?"

“To go sightseeing. Also to get some real combat experience.”

“If you go there to help, make sure you don’t beg for your life. I’ll drop you off right now, so why don’t you go home?”

“There’s no need for that.”

“What’s your level? Are you 40 yet?”

“How about you, uncle?”

“Hey! Uncle?!? Call me hyung, hyung! Don’t be too jealous of me, I’m sure if you work hard you could be an amazing person like hyung. Come with me and learn from how hyung does it.”

I felt annoyed but shut my mouth thinking I just needed to endure for a bit.

Soon, we arrived at the location the GPS indicated.

“There it is. Looks like the military already fired off flares.”

He stopped the car and started to equip his sword and armor pieces from the backseat.

I realized that, like Sangmin, he used a two-handed weapon.

Even though he put on his equipment, it didn’t do much as I could tell it was low tier.

The one positive thing was that by wearing his equipment, I could not see his disgusting clothes anymore. I was at peace again.

Especially that white T-shirt reflecting the... black raisins or something so revolting I could hardly describe it.

After equipping his boots from the trunk, he stepped forward.

“If you follow me, you really could die you know!?”

“I’ll just watch quietly.”

“Fine. Don’t regret it when you get hurt or die.”

-Mocking laughter.-

With a smile, he fumbled a cigarette between his thumb and

index finger, walking ahead of me.

I spoke as to mock the man who was moving further away from me.

“That reward is mine! Now, shall I go make some money?”

Chapter 17 - To Higher Places (4)

Around the portal lit by purple lights, there were already 30 Awakened members.

The intensity of the vibrations coming from the portal's markers was 13! Thus it was a level 13 portal.

Most of them were warrior class, holding swords and spears, axes and spears, and a few were healers holding one hand staffs and shields.

They should be people who were hunting from the level 12th dungeon, probably level 45-60 Awakened.

Instead of running in, I decided to observe the situation.

I had information, but I needed to be careful as this was my first real combat.

It was then.

-Lewd laughing.-

A sharp female's laughter rang, nearly giving me goose bumps.

Thankfully I didn't arrive late.

The source of the laughter was a 'succubus'.

From what I found out, a succubus is a doll-like monster that looks like a female with two small horns on their head, wings on her back, and a tail.

As the laughter ended, succubi started to pour out from the portal.

The Awakened around the portal gripped onto their weapons tightly and prepared to fight.

"Let's not mess with the corpses!!"

-Generic combat yell from expendable background character.-

“Let’s do well.”

Several Awakened surrounded the portal entrance, swinging their weapons toward the stream of succubi pouring out.

-Slicing/chopping.-

Did they become aware of me? From time to time, I felt as if I was being watched.

Easily, the succubi were spilling red blood and being ripped apart.

As they fell one by one, without even being able to move past 5m they all started to fall apart.

There was no surprise, since these are veteran hunters who ran the level 12 dungeons as if eating rice.

With many years of combat experience, they should be able to perform such prowess.

However not everyone was a veteran.

A few hunters came without any experience, following the promise of money.

I could tell just by looking at them that a few of them were useless like that.

-Somewhat generic footsteps.-

In a single moment, the Awakened moved forward.

But then.

-Generic stepping.-

A few idiotic-looking people stepped on the succubi’s corpses.

As soon as the noise was made, the hunters in the front turned around and glared at them.

And then...

“Who was the nincompoop who stepped on the succubus!”

“Ah shit. We’re doomed!”

“Why would you come here without even knowing about succubi!”

Everyone looked at the succubus’ corpse, freaking out as if they’ve messed with something of great importance.

Following their gazes, I also looked at the succubus’ corpse.

It was at that moment.

From the rag-like collapsed bodies of the succubi, a red light began to spin around it.

The light shot out towards those who’ve stepped on the corpse.

-Stabbing.-

-Generic character screaming in pain and regretting being born as an extra.-

Witnessing this, the fashion terrorist yelled.

“Turned into a shit show! Everyone wake the fuck up!”

Others who heard the screams used skills and struck with their weapons at the red light embedded in the backs of the fallen.

According to the strategic information for level 13th dungeons, one could block the charging lights but ordinary strength could not cut or slice through them.

The lights embedded connected to the bodies of the other fallen succubi like a hose, and the bodies of the Awakened that fell from the attack began to deteriorate.

It seemed that blood was being sucked from the Awakened to recover.

-More generic panicking sounds.-

The nearby healers used recovery magic to no avail.

It was like putting water on poison.

Unlike the fallen Awakened who continuously shrank, the fallen succubi rose up, looking bigger than before.

Only one or two corpses were stepped on, yet all fallen succubi were affected.

“Retards! Thanks to the newbies, we’re all going to die! It’s a ‘revival succubus’! Prepare yourselves!”

Taking account of the succubi’s speed, escape was impossible. We could only fight them.

Those who lost their lives and came back are twice as strong.

It was a phenomenon that occurred when the fallen were subjected to any physical force.

I was able to witness the succubus’ ‘bloodsucking revival’ that I learned only in text.

In the strategies for clearing level 13th dungeons, not touching the corpses of the succubi was a crucial rule.

While it rendered one immobile in the midst of aggro’ed mobs, it was much better being sitting ducks than meeting a revival succubus.

What I got to witness personally wasn’t just the bloodsucking resurrection.

-Another generic scream of pain.-

“Pl-please, let me live...!”

People were pathetically dying in front of me.

Not monsters, but people like me were dying.

I’ve committed genocide against countless monsters, but it was my first time seeing people dying.

-Puking.-

Looking at the situation, I threw up without realizing.

I could only look at the cruel scene hopelessly.

Behind were revived succubi, while from the front came a stream of succubi from the portal.

With a single mistake, this place became a living hell.

The revived spun quickly, shredding apart the Awakened with their tails and wings.

-Ripping and slicing.-

Thanks to the mistake of the Awakened who simply followed the promise of money, the entire group was being slaughtered.

Within minutes, the situation had reversed.

Everyone struggled against them.

Not for money, but for their lives.

Since the situation escalated like this, the dispatched members from the association only waited.

The man who came with me swore, stabbing at the succubi.

His shout woke me up from the daze of having to look at human corpses.

It was a shout directly aimed at me.

“You pieces of shit! Die! Die! Kid! Don’t just watch and run out of here!”

Recovering from my momentary hesitation, I put on my skull ring from my pocket and ran crazily towards the portal.

‘Frozen Shield!’

While running, I cast Frozen Shield.

I ran towards the Awakened who were pinned due to the attacks of the revived succubi.

Then I grabbed an owner-less sword and halberd from the corpses, equipping one on each hand and blocking the portal

entrance.

If I used 'Eye of the Storm', the Awakened with low magic resist could be pulled in, so I only cast 'Piercing Sword'. Well, even if people weren't around me, these succubi wouldn't be affected by a magic skill anyways.

Suddenly, a ridiculous amount of swords and halberds dispersed in a stream.

It was an amount that could block out the portal perfectly.

-Flying weapon sound.-

"Don't worry about the portal and cover the rear!"

"You're crazy! I told you to run, but did you come here to die? Run kid!"

"....."

Maybe he sensed something from my eyes as I looked at him silently, since he stopped talking and pointed his sword at the rear.

Looking at us with the thoughts of 'I must survive', other Awakened pointed their swords and spears towards the enemies at the rear.

The survivor count was only 12! I was holding my ground casting Piercing Sword continuously, so there was no chance another could make the mistake of stepping on a corpse.

Despite our differences, they were people like me.

Most would have a family and something they want to take responsibility for or protect.

I had no thoughts of being a man of justice.

But at least for today...

"I'll rip you to shreds and kill you!"

Chapter 18 - To Higher Places (5)

[Gained 800 exp.]

[Gained 800 exp.]

After the whirling of blades, what once was an endless stream was noticeably reduced.

When I turned around, the 12 Awakened were giving their all to protect the rear.

Even the fashion terrorist, squeezing out all the strength he had left, fought against the remaining 3 revival succubi.

I couldn't bear to look at the fashion, but his skill seemed passable.

And that's a how a little bit of time passed by.

“Is it over?”

No more monsters came out of the portal.

Only those three were left.

I advanced towards them, casting Piercing Sword ceaselessly.

Piercing Sword's attack did not go towards the surrounding Awakened.

The attacks only went towards those I determined as enemies.

[Gained 1500 exp.]

.
.
It didn't take long for them to meet the ground.

Even after 20 minutes had passed, not even shadows of the association's hunters were found.

The surviving Awakened cursed the association, wheezing and heavily breathing.

“Ha... Ha.....”

“Those bastard association hunters!”

It only lasted a moment. Everyone hurriedly started to leave.

That's right. The portal still wasn't closed. It meant there were more to come.

“Quickly, get in the car! Hurry up!”

From afar, the fashion terrorist shouted at me while urgently starting the ignition to the car.

Everyone else had left long ago.

It was time for the boss I came for to appear.

It was then.

Somewhere I heard a terrifying laughter.

When I turned towards where the noise came from, I saw a creature similar to a succubus near the portal.

The one who came out of the portal was an ‘incubus’.

The floor was drenched in blood, and corpses disfigured to the point where it was nearly unrecognizable were strewn about.

The hands that held the sword and halberd tightened.

Besides me, a loud horn and yelling continued, but I had no plans of running.

“I only came here to see your face, but now I have to kill you.”

Finishing my words, I was determined.

Because I knew what would happen immediately after.

Without a doubt, as the incubus raised his hand to the sky, all 200 fallen succubi and revival succubi arose at once.

The shitty situation was repeating again.

But there was no need to be surprised since I knew already.

The boss had no combat abilities. His only role was to use all his mana to revive all his subordinates.

“Zombie like bastards.”

The succubi let out a piercing scream and flooded towards me, but in front of the powerful skill, they were like paper being ripped to shreds.

If a warrior class cast Piercing Sword, the limit would be 10 times, but since I did not have that limit, I was able to maintain both offense and defense by casting it continuously.

And the destructive power doubled since I was able to cast it separately from each hand.

All swords and halberds that slain the succubi flew towards the incubus simultaneously.

It had no offensive ability, but had high defensive ability like that of a boss.

So I poured my attacks without respite.

And then.

Helplessly allowing all the attacks to hit, with a scream, he swiftly fell, pierced all over.

My body was covered in blood.

And as if the make that blood brighter, the blood stones from the mobs floated.

Seems the drops only came out after the boss was defeated.

All combat ended when the glowing hue became a blinding light cover the area.

Watching from afar, the man came running out of the car asking questions.

“Wha... what the? How did you do it?”

“.....”

Collecting all the stones, I threw the weapons on the floor and headed to the car.

If the night hunting and morning portal defense wasn't enough, the pain and exhaustion from seeing people dying came all at once.

‘Ah... I have to go to school.....’

To me who was keeping silent, the man continued to talk without stopping.

“How did you do it? You said you were a magician but what was that skill, and why did it continuously cast? Answer me!”

“Ah, whatever! What's your name hyung?”

“Uh? Uh. My name is Yi Jong Ho. So answer me. How did you do it!”

“Jong Ho-hyung, why did you keep watching me?”

“When? When the succubus came out? I was looking to see if you were dead or alive.”

“When they revived and also when the boss came out... it was you who told me to run, right?”

“Well it would be a waste to have someone so young die. That's all there is to it.”

It seemed he was an okay guy.

Just like SangMin and his party, this man too. His strange first impression was already forgotten.

But it seems I'm still far from looking at his clothing style.

Seems though that the power and money weren't the only things

I earned.

I wasn't trying to get something as pathetic as networking through dangerous combat like this.

But 'earning extra while doing the same thing' idea isn't so bad, isn't it?

"When are the association guys arriving? I need to get the money quickly and leave for school, and change my clothes as well."

"So you really won't say? My words were too harsh, wasn't it? Sorry."

It was then, as he was about to continue to harass me, a car rolled up and stopped nearby.

"Everyone, report the damages of the situation."

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

Seems those association bastards finally arrived.

'It's like asking for chopsticks after I've cooked the ramen for them?'

Ten of those who seemed to be hunters from the association went towards the scene, while a cleanly dressed association employee was taking account of the situation.

Since there was no one other than the two of us near the portal, the association members that were sent out walked towards us.

"Hail! Thank you for your hard work. We were watching from 10 minutes ago via drone, but please do explain in detail."

Due to the corpses lying about, it was possible the situation could be misunderstood as the Awakened fighting for drops, so these association bastards were watching via drone ahead of time.

They were expecting an exhausted person to explain to the situation after arriving late.

I did not want to speak with them at all.

I looked at Jong Ho with eyes that said ‘the most tired person ever’ and spoke.

“Jong Ho-hyung, go.”

“Uh? Uh uhm okay.”

Jong Ho left the car and explained the situation.

Since I was holding onto all the drops, after the conversation finished, the association member walked towards me.

“I’ve heard the full story. Please show me your ‘Awakened ID’.”

It was something I looked forward to more than lunch – the time to collect the money.

After passing my ID, I was trying to estimate how much I earned.

‘A C rank stone and 13 D rank stone is mine, and I wonder how much will they pay out?’

Next to the car, while the association member was busy looking for something, I asked Jong Ho quietly as to not be overheard.

“How much do they give out in cases like this, hyung?”

“Hm... Since it’s a level 13 gate, 260 million won?”

“Hey, stop joking around and tell me.”

“260 million! I’m telling you that it’s correct?”

‘100 million isn’t like the casual name of your neighbor, you shouldn’t just go around saying it because you’re bored! Are they really giving me this much money for getting one?’

However since it did not look like Jong Ho was joking, I continued.

“Then if I received the money, how much should I give you?”

“To me? Why?”

When he received my question, his eyes became wide with a

childlike expression.

“It’s something we all worked hard to get. Since you were the only one still here, at least I should give some to hyung.”

“Ah, no need. Why would someone who hid in a corner deserve anything else than embarrassment? Hyung may be without money, but he still has a conscience. When I grow stronger, I’ll be hunting it solo and receiving the money with pride.”

“But.....”

It was then the association personnel handed me the terminal device and spoke.

“Here it is. Please confirm the 260 million won.”

“Yes? Okay.....”

“Please sign here as well.”

“Yes.”

“You probably know already but this is only fake money. We’ll give you the actual money when you visit the association and confirm your identity. However, you have to visit within a month.”

“.....”

When a portal explodes, you are able to prevent a ridiculous amount of damage if you stop the situation from getting out of hand.

Because of that, the association determined the reward with the level of the portal, and paid out appropriately.

After buying the skill book and ring, I found out my Awakened credit balance was nil.

But with the amount the association gave me, the balance showed 260 million won being added next to my 3 million won.

Hearing his explanation though, it seemed that I could not use

that 260 million won currently.

Ah, these are good people.....

In a single moment, the 'bastard association members' became 'association members that I thank and owe my gratitude'.

"Thank you for your hard work. Then, we'll be going."

Since the Awakened balance panel did not include my class, the association member spoke without any doubts.

After finishing the conversation and walking away, he suddenly turned back around.

"Ah, are you perhaps the Awakened known for clearing level 12 dungeons solo within just a couple days of becoming Awakened? Your name is the same. The association told me to take special care of that person....."

How should I answer, do I need to tell the truth? If I did so I'd lose time and of course, my ability would be exposed.

It wasn't that bad to have my ability exposed, but I would probably be offered to be the protector of justice or something.

While I was deep in thought, it was then.

"Eh, you aren't him, right? Since he was a magician class, there would be no reason for him to be here. Well, thank you for your hard work."

I was thankful at the association member who answered himself so gleefully.

I wondered how he was able to be a government worker with that kind of a head on his shoulders.

It seems as though entering dungeons are tracked via terminal, and records are kept by the association.

'This could become annoying. For now, let's rest.'

After finishing my thoughts, I spoke to Jong Ho who silently

observed the situation.

“Hyung, I’m sorry but could you take me home?”

“Yes! Yes! Let’s go! We need to go! Let’s talk while we go. If you’re going back for clothes, should I lend you hyung’s?”

‘.....’

I was struck from fear greater than meeting the incubus.

‘Ah goose bumps! I don’t think I could even go takeout food waste and trash in these clothes’ was what I wanted to reply with, but I did not since I liked Jong Ho.

“Ah, haha. No it’s fine. It’s really, really fine. Haha...”

Chapter 19 - Start

After the portal explosion incident, I was frequently contacting Jong Ho.

To be honest, it was because I could obtain vast amounts of information from hyung.

Friendship to information ratio was about 3:7?

Jong Ho said that he became an Awakened while he was working as a manager for the Awakened. It was like debuting to be an idol while working as the manager for one.

Of course there was information from the guild, but since I had nearly no chances of meeting high ranking guild members, the information from the ranker manager felt much sweeter.

After my first combat with succubi, I continued to run the level 13 dungeons to level up.

The succubi allowed me to level up greatly.

The method was like this.

Kill all but one or two out of a 200 succubi group.

Then step on a succubus' corpse. Just recklessly stomp on them!

Even in this situation, I could not forget to continuously cast Piercing Sword.

Casting it with each hand, even if it was a skill without cooldowns, small gaps would be created in between repeated casts.

So I cast the spell on each of my hand with 3~5 seconds of delay after another.

The fallen that were stepped on had red bloodsucking lights pierce the surviving succubi since the lights could not reach me due to being blocked by my Heugdo.

Thus, 200 revival succubi would be created.

After that, the boss incubus would appear and revive them again.

‘Like boiling bone soup, boil again. Boil again. Boil again.’

The experience I earned from succubi was 16 million, and through the revival succubi I was able to earn 30 million twice. In one clear, including the boss, the experience I earned was around 80 million!

Unlike others that avoided the corpses while hunting, I recklessly stepped on them.

Even the stone rank was C.

When my luck was good, even B ranks dropped, and since the boss was a C ranked with the rise of a level for the dungeon, I was obtaining rewards that couldn't be even compared with the previous lower level dungeons.

As my level rose and the money pooled, I thought of my mother.

Next to the bed lay a rainbow paper box.

In there was 500 million. After visiting the association, I also received 260 million.

To show my mother, I had saved it up and brought it all here.

Ha... It was a moment that I was waiting for... It was a success that I dreamed about, but only today did I realize how difficult it was to tell her.

So today! I decided to bring my mother with me.

I wanted to surprise her.

While riding the car back, I made the necessary preparations to convince her and to fulfill my filial duty for the first time in 18 years.

*

“Driver, please take me in front of the market.”

“Yes. To the market.”

As the taxi meter clicks, I was looking outside the window and saw there were many destroyed buildings being rebuilt.

Even now, many suffer, die, and fight.

Thanks to the ones who cause harm, I am earning money.

Someone's pain, becoming my dream and hopes.....

If you thought about it, it was very double sided and ironic.

There must have been damages from the rebellion, but civilian areas like the heart of the city, unlike the government areas, were all due to the monsters.

"It's 13,000 won."

"Yes, thank you for your hard work. Drive safely."

After handing the money and a light greeting, I left the taxi.

There it is.

A small Guk-su-jib located near the entrance to the marketplace.

It was a place my mother worked for 7 years now.

Through the entrance made of glass, I saw my mother.

I took a deep breath and headed towards there.

As soon as I opened the door to the restaurant, I heard angry yelling.

"This bitch, are you joking with me! You brought this for me to eat?"

The plates were then smashed.

"Oh no, I apologize."

A heavily drunk man was holding a chair and threatening my mother.

The noodle soup was thrown to the ground and the bowl was broken, just like my mother's dignity.

I saw how my mother continued to apologize.

They say people become tunnel vision when angry, and I only saw him, that bastard in my field of vision.

Instantly, I smashed open the store's door and grabbed him by the collar.

It was a situation that made my fists clench and teeth grind without realization.

I glared at him as if to kill without a word.

“Uh! Uh? Who is this bastard.”

“Min, Min-Cheol-ah.....”

With my mother's short words, I felt surprise and shame.

But I heard a little bit of relief mixed in. That was enough.

She was a person who didn't complain once during my elementary years when a person called father beat her to near death.

I wished that she'd rely on me now.

To a mother like that, happening again in front of me!

I could not stop my rage. I grabbed his collar roughly again.

He flailed about, growling.

“What is this... Is this your son? Ha, you and your mother are both are nonsensical. Son of a bitch, why don't you let me go?”

“Shut the fuck up.....”

“What? You piece of shit!”

He struggled free of my grasp and threw the chair, missing my mother's forehead by a hair's breadth.

My mother's forehead was cut, and deep red blood spilled down her cheek.

My temper lost, I threw him.

With a smash, he went into the table.

The table broke apart instantly, and he rolled about the floor with the dishware.

“Ugh... This piece of shit, you have a death wi-.....”

I didn't listen to the rest of his cursing.

Because my left hand was grabbing his head already.

I roughly lifted him up.

“Ugh! Let me go! Why aren't you letting me go?!”

“.....”

Instead of answering, I gathered lightning in my right hand.

Today I will kill this man and go to hell.

Even in hell, I will chew him up so much that no one can ever find nor remember him.

I promised to protect, and I felt that it was a promise I can keep now.

But that promise broke apart now, and I felt rage and lament as though a person who lost everything.

As I moved my right hand hold condensed magic towards him...! I heard my mother's voice as she grabbed onto my arm.

As I heard those words, I regained my sanity.

“Min-Cheol-ah... That's enough. You can stop now.....”

I saw my mother shaking her head.

Letting him go, I released the condensed power in my right arm.

Despite being drunk, he must have felt my killing intent as his pants was soaked.

Before long, the police arrived.

Receiving the report from the police, a group of 'Awakened

incident cleanup crew” was dispatched.

One of the police officers took my mother to the hospital, and after that, I told them about the incident.

The incident was explained as him glancing my mother with a chair.

Even if it was his fault, since an Awakened got involved, the cases were separated into two, one between him and my mother, and one between him and me.

I was interrogated for an hour at a local ‘association investigation station’.

Unfortunately or thankfully, I was able to leave without any worries as the man I tried to kill was only lightly injured.

After leaving, I went back to the noodle soup restaurant.

I came with the thought to pay for the broken items and disrupting business.

It was a place my mother had worked for 7 years, and the owner bowed his head in apology that he couldn’t stop it first.

I had asked what the cost of damage would to the cops beforehand, and gave the amount with a little extra to the owner.

With the words to hire someone else to replace my mother.

After solving the incident, I went to the hospital.

Opening the patient room’s door, I saw my mother.

As soon as she found me, she raised her injured body and spoke.

“Son. Have you eaten? If only I spoke better and turned him away without incident.....”

“Are you okay?”

“Of course! Mother is fine! I’ve gone through combat on the ground, water, in the air, and even battles involving bombardment. You think I’d lose to someone like that?”

“Miss Bak, when did you become so tough?”

I had to hit my vocal cords and stop the sudden urge to cry.

“Mom, you don’t have to work at the restaurant anymore. You saw right? That your son is super strong?”

“.....”

“I’ll take of everything now, so please don’t suffer anymore mother.”

“Son, don’t you remember what mother said? That I can live without money but I can’t live without my son? The debt can be canceled after I die you know?”

“Don’t say that! Why would you have to die? I’ll take care of the debt myself. You don’t have to worry anymore...!”

She stopped my words and looked directly into my eyes.

“Isn’t hunter work dangerous? I saw a lot of it on the news. What kind of a parent would send their child to a tiger’s den to make money!”

40 years ago, born in the age where the monsters arose, she was illiterate and uneducated yet valued her own son so much that she endured all the suffering to make sure that her son would not share the same fate.

I understood my mother’s feelings of flatly denying it.

However I had to take this opportunity that did not visit just anyone.

I told her about my ability.

“There is no way that I will get hurt or die, mother.”

“Is that true?”

“I’m telling you that it’s true?”

“If you get hurt or die, I’m going to die on the spot too so promise me!”

“I understand, promise.”

Convincing her continued for a long time, and finally did my mother give me permission to begin after taking my fingerprint as signature on my promise.

Finally I could give her an easy and comfortable life.

‘Now we begin.’

Chapter 20 - Noblesse Guild

Like usual, I continued my growth by hunting after school.

If there is one thing different, my mother would be there to warmly welcome me when I returned home?

With all the money I've saved up till now, I was able to afford a house that we could live in.

I was finally able to leave the house that looked as though it would collapse soon.

For now, all we had was a small apartment, but it was not a place we would be staying for long.

It was only the first step towards the 'happiness' I wanted so much.

I met with Jong Ho near dawn after hunting.

It was to have a simple meal and to ask questions about some decent skills.

I could obtain the information on the skill encyclopedia app, but I asked in order to learn about their price to effectiveness ratio.

"Hyung, out of all the magician skills, which are the best?"

"Ones you could use at your level?"

"No. Out of the whole."

"'Glacial Field', 'Meteor Call', and 'Magma Pool' are the high ranking magic skills I think?"

I knew the three spells Jong Ho mentioned were all A+ ranking from the encyclopedia.

"Are those three the most used?"

"Magician rankers use them the most, but the costs are enormous. Why, are you planning to buy them?"

“How much is the cost?”

“Out of the three, the cheapest one is the ‘Magma Pool’ and probably is about 15 billion won?”

‘15 billion won? Why is this hyung like this every time he talks about money!’ Since he wasn’t the type of person to lie, I continued on my question.

“If hyung was a magician and had around 2 billion won. What would you learn?”

“2 billion... You could learn a B rank skill. Let’s see.....”

The Piercing Sword skill that’s a B rank had the price of 120 million won, but seeing that a skill of the same B rank for magician costs 2 billion won, I recognized there was a massive difference between classes.

While I was thinking, Jong Ho continued talking.

“If you are like me, I’d pretend to be insane and learn ‘Gravity Laser’!

Before he could even finish talking, I searched the encyclopedia for the skill.

It was a skill that continuously attacked anything within 1~100m range until all enemy life perished.

It was a skill that had increasing mana cost the further away the target was and the longer you casted the skill due to stronger enemies. However due to the skill being a channeled spell, it did not have a cooldown but instead was an on/off type.

‘Oho? Seems pretty decent? The one thing that disappoints me is that it cannot choose its target like Piercing Sword does.’

“It is an A rank skill, but due to the fact that it is an attack that damages over time and the massive amount of mana cost makes it that so unless you are top high ranker, most do not bother with it, you see? That’s why the cost is similar to a B rank, and the hyungs

I used to take care of as a manager obtained this skill no one used, even trying to awaken the skill, making it a trend in the past.”

Before he could continue his confident speech, I cut in to ask questions.

“It’s at the market, right?”

“Are you joking with me? Have you seen a flea market sell a 2 billion won cow calf cuts?”

“They sell items costing 120 million though. So where can I get it then?”

“You have to go to the association!”

“Ah... The association gives me a headache.”

A message arrived while I was riled up about a new skill I was going to learn.

-Emergency Summons—

Hello ‘Noblesse’ guild members.

On Friday 16th of August, 2015, the situation with the guild ‘Empire’ has worsened and at 18:00, there will be a guild pvp occurring. All guild members are to participate please.

Guild master Park Hyun will provide compensation.

“What the, shit!”

“What kind of a text is making you say that?”

“It’s hyung’s fashion. I can’t bear to look at it.”

“Hyung’s clothing selections are all so wonderful that whatever I wear becomes fashionable, I can’t be bothered to pay attention.”

“Pff! It’s a joke. What it actually was a summon from my guild.”

“What, you had a guild? You look like the type that can’t get along with anyone though?”

“Hyung, do you want to be cut in half like a succubus?”

“Cough... Can’t I even make a joke? That’s right! Since we’re on the topic about the succubus. What kind of a passive did you have to be able to fight off all of them?”

“My cooldown for mana regen is pretty quick.”

“Still, to be able to recklessly spam Piercing Sword? A magician at that? Min-Cheol, I was at the bottom in this gig for 9 years. Who do you think you’re trying to fool!?”

“I’ll tell you later. Hyung, I don’t trust people very much. I’m still in the process of developing trust for you. So later! Okay? While we’re at this topic, do you want to be my manager, hyung?”

“Hey you! Hyung was born a man! I’ve Awakened too! I have dreams you know!”

Jong Ho-hyung put his arm around me and looked up, then jokingly told me.

“Well, as a hyung I could at least give you advice.”

“If you want to.”

“We’ve known each other for over two weeks but I still don’t know your level, don’t I?”

“79. I’ve leveled up since yesterday.”

“I thought you were around that when I saw you fighting against the succubus. Seems you were awakened early, huh?

‘At that time I was level 61. Awakened two months ago.....’

It seemed like something he didn’t need to know, so I kept it to myself.

“Sure. Ah, I don’t want to go. Precious time that I feel like it’s a waste even to use it on hunting! They’ve not called me once, but the moment I try to learn a skill do they call.”

“What’s your guild?”

“Noblesse.”

“Noblesse?”

“Yes. Do you know about it?”

When Jong Ho heard the name ‘Noblesse’, his face looked uneasy.

“... How long has it been since you joined?”

“One month? A little over one month.”

“Was there anything strange when you entered?”

“I’ve checked the paperwork and recorded everything, but it seemed there was nothing wrong? Why do you ask?”

“Maybe it’s because hyung has worked at the bottom for a long time, but recently I heard some bad rumors about that guild.”

‘Rumors are only rumors! I shouldn’t trust any shady information’ was my thought, but I decided to hear Jong Ho out. The condition I’ve accepted didn’t make sense 2, and it wouldn’t be bad to be prepared just in case.

“What’s the rumor?”

“I don’t know the details, but I heard a fair amount of Noblesse guild members have connections with radicals. There isn’t much credibility and the rumor could be utter nonsense, but just be aware.”

“Well... for now, I’ll keep it in mind.”

*

“Noblesse guild of 542 save for 1. Due to outside circumstances, one was not able to show.”

“Empire guild of 740, none absent. That is all.”

At 6 in the afternoon, ‘Seocho-gu Awakened Association’s’ orders have brought these guild members together.

A fight that occurred while hunting became heated, and since both guild masters could not solve it with diplomacy, they decided

to settle it with a guild battle.

Level 21 dungeon, Awakened members from 'Noblesse' and 'Empire' formed a party to go in, but one of them had stolen the drops.

There always had been small arguments and disagreements with the Empire guild, but since they were hunting before dawn, there was a lack of people to group with. Thus they joined another to form a party despite the bad blood between the two, and this had occurred.

'If you can't solve with words, use force...' was the solution that the government had come up with.

Using rivalry to raise stronger Awakened.

There was no way to avoid collision between the guilds, but it was instead used to make each other compete, and to win, growth would be fostered.

It was one of the reasons why people wanted to join bigger and more powerful guilds.

In the end, power decide right or wrong, and the guild that lost had to accept the terms and conditions of the winners.

In this case, it would be a money prize multiple times the value of the drops from the level 21 dungeon.

There was no need for government or politics. I gazed at our guild master Park Hyun.

It wasn't due to the warning I heard from Jong Ho early morning weighing on my mind.

Behind Park Hyun, I saw many familiar faces.

Sangmin hyung, In-Ah noona, Yong-Hyun hyung, Chang-Hyuk uncle too.....

"Oho. Isn't my bento there? Hey!"

Jae-Hyuk sent a wink at me.

“.....”

Without a word and a frown, I just kept staring at the ground.

“Adorable cutie. We should go together after this, right? Hm?”

“Now, we’ll be starting. Matching the smaller guild’s 5% out of the total members, the participants will consist of 27. The location will be underground from this current location. If the Awakened becomes unable to fight, the referee on standby will judge you unfit to continue and you will be removed from combat. Guild masters, please let us know when you are ready.”

Guild pvp was to promote the growth of the Awakened for portal explosions or warfare, so personnel loss was to be avoided at all costs.

That’s why when a guild pvp occurs, the association’s high ranking healers are dispatched to summon out incapacitated fighters and immediately heal them.

‘It wouldn’t be bad to see what kinds of skills are used and how they will be used.’

Thus, I was able to see my first guild war.

Chapter 21 - Noblesse Guild (2)

An underground area was prepared by the Association.

This is where the guild battles will take place.

The participating Awakened moved to the center, and the ground slowly sank down, bringing us towards the underground space.

Those not participating from both guilds, such as myself, could see from the floor above.

The floor that was made of glass became transparent enough to see through, revealing a guild war zone the size of half a soccer field.

The building was constructed of refined blood stone so that it would not collapse under most magic spells and attack skills.

It was a material hastily developed after the terrorism 6 years ago at the 'central plant center' and was used as construction material currently for important government structures.

Each side consisted of 27 members.

Each guild's composition showed their differences clearly.

Noblesse <<8 tanks, 4 healers, 1 bard, 4 magicians, 10 warriors>>
A defensive composition.

Empire <<4 tanks, 4 healers, 1 bard, 3 assassin, 6 magicians, 8 warriors, 1 ranger>> On the other hand, an offensive composition.

Those that entered in the guild pvp were the top 5% of the Awakened, so necromancers, witch doctors, voodoo users' debuff could not affect them very much and was not found in either guilds as participants.

Everyone wore the vest prepared by association.

It was a vest that showed your vitality, allowing the association to monitor you just in case you were about to die. A vest that only

the association was allowed to use.

Guild wars were not allowed to start without the vests, since any Awakened could be treated as long as they were still alive with the skill 'Status Negation'.

Also the association forbade murder, so if anyone did perish, the guild was given a massive penalty. Guild pvp was a fight without the loss of life, but a fight for pride.

Separating to the east and west, everyone hastily cast buffs and began discussing strategies.

The bards' music echoed throughout the underground, highlighting the difference between each guild.

'Guardian's Armor' was used by the Noblesse guild to raise their defense, while Empire used 'Horn of the Advance Party' to attack swiftly, both had amazing momentum with their own strategies.

To obtain greater information, I went next to Sangmin and his party.

"Hello hyung."

"Ah, hasn't it been awhile, Min-Cheol? Aren't you very busy nowadays?"

"Yeah, I'm dying trying to both hunt and go to school."

"Take it easy, since our bodies are our fortune."

After the short greeting, the announcement for the guild pvp began, and the guild war started.

"Test, test. 'Noblesse' vs 'Empire' guild pvp will begin.

5. 4. 3. 2. 1. Start!"

"Hyung, what's the average level of the participants?"

"Hm..... Despite both our guilds being a mid-tier guild, only 150~170-ish."

"What, their levels don't seem that high? I was able to hit level 79

in a little over two months.....’

Of course I was leveling at a speed tens of times faster than others, but I was kind of disappointed at how the levels aren’t that high if Awakenees have been around for 40 years.

“Why are the levels so low if monsters have appeared since 40 years ago?”

“It’s because our guild isn’t that big. High ranking guilds have 300~350, some beyond that.”

“Ah, do you know the level of our guild master then?”

“Master? If I recall, wasn’t she level 210? Why do you ask?”

“Just curious is all.....”

I couldn’t help but be concerned about Park Hyun. For the unknown, just in case.....

From underground, great roars of destruction echoed.

I couldn’t help but be glued to the scene below.

At the west, the Noblesse tanks covered the magicians and healers, while at the east, the Empire’s assassins and ranger looked for gaps in between.

Each of the guild’s warriors was in fierce combat at the front, and the most noticeable was Park Hyun’s secretary who delivered the sword to my house.

With outstanding moves, the enemies’ shields were easily knocked off.

“That’s ‘Whirlwind,’ a rank A warrior skill!”

Sangmin-hyung who was next to me explained with excitement akin to a child looking at cotton candy.

With incredible rotational force, the shields of the enemies were mowed down, and then was followed up with Piercing Sword.

“That’s something even I know. Piercing Sword, right?”

“Yes. But that’s not your regular Piercing Sword. An awakened Piercing Sword.”

“Awakened? Is there something that changes when a skill is awakened?”

“Of course! When a skill level becomes 100, the skill can be awakened.”

“What, is there another separate skill book?”

“No. You have to obtain ‘awakening essence’ in order for it to be possible. You can raise your awakened skill to level 100 again. All you have to do is consume the essence and choose the skill you want to use it on, but while it is easy to say, to get an awakening essence is like catching a star in the sky.....”

‘Oho.....’

I understood the basics about awakening skills, but I thought I had obtained some good information.

Focusing again, I looked back at the guild pvp and noticed each magician used weak attacks against another.

The magician did not use any AoE spells but used single target instead.

Since they were high ranking Awakened of their guilds, I was thinking that I would see spells like ‘Meteor Call’ or ‘Magma Pool’ levels of magic I heard about from Jong Ho-hyung.

“Aren’t the magicians kind of weak?”

“They’re keeping an eye on each other.”

“Keeping an eye on each other?”

“A magician is limited in how much mana they have, right? Due to that, the usage of their skill is greatly limited. That’s why they wait until the tanks and healers run out of mana, when all the buffs and shields fall off. It’s obvious since they use all their mana in one go, right?”

“Aha.....”

It was then.

“So it begins. To think that they started off with a meteor strike.”

Looking at where Sangmin pointed, I saw how Empire, who had the greater number of mages, had casted ‘Meteor Call’ first.

From the roof of the underground, or beneath my feet, a massive comet was forming, bellowing red flames.

At the same time, all tankers and healers near the mage began to form up a defense.

I couldn’t tell the exact amount of time that was required to cast, but it looked like it took some time.

Seeing this, a magician of Noblesse also casted a spell.

“If a meteor was used, ‘Ice Bug’ should come out.”

“What’s that?”

“It’s an ice spell that counters Meteor Call. If both skill levels are similar, both spells cancel each other out. Looking at the Awakened of each side, the level difference would be 10 at best? It’s a spell that uses up pretty much all your mana, so there’s no way it isn’t a high ranking skill, right? Both are A ranking spells and polar opposites of one another.”

Soon as he finished explaining, a 3m ice spike came out from the ground.

The casting was timed to hit the meteor at the center perfectly as the meteor descended.

With massive amounts of steam forming, both spells disappeared as if not existing in the first place.

‘Each skill has a counter. But with awakening the skill and enough levels, seems you can win? Good to know.’

After 10 minutes, you could tell who won and loss on the

battlefield.

Both sides had magicians, healers, and tanks still alive. However, Empire had lost all warriors and assassins, as they were deemed unable to continue by the referee and was summoned outside.

The person responsible for this situation was Park Hyun's intern secretary.

Wearing black sunglasses and with an emotionless expression, the secretary had completely annihilated the opponents.

It seemed both sides acknowledged who the winner and loser was, as they began to take off the vests and began to walk to the center.

“Seems it's over now, so let go out to eat!”

“Going out to eat? Do I have to go?”

“Maybe not on other days, but you have to come if it's after a guild war.”

‘Damn it! My precious time! As soon as I pay off the gratitude for the sword, I'm quitting.’ was the thought filling my head.

But by attending to the guild war today, I've learned information I haven't even thought about.

Skill awakening, the essence needed to do so, and skill counters. Learning about these three made it so that giving up a day for hunting didn't seem so wasteful.

“Ah..... All right, I'll go.”

With a sudden vibration, I looked at my phone.

Chapter 22 - Noblesse Guild (3)

As I finished my conversation with Sangmin-hyung, a call came.

“Yes. Hyung.”

“Uh. What’s up Min-Cheol?”

“Hyung, I’ve only been here for an hour. Hyung, perhaps you like me?”

“I just had a bad feeling. If there is nothing wrong, that’s fine. Please let hyung know if you become suspicious or notice something strange. Talk to you later then.”

‘What the? Boring. Only talking about himself and ending the call.’

After the call ended, master Park Hyun spoke towards the where the guild members grouped up.

“Everyone, thank you for your hard work. I reserved a BBQ rib place in front of here, so I’ll see all there.”

“Yes!”

“Understood!”

I had given up a day that could have been used for hunting, but it was a time where I could gather a lot of information.

With this much, it should more than make up for the lost time, right?

I left the west section association branch and leisurely headed toward the restaurant.

To make sure that all 500 members could be hosted, she must have selected a restaurant where the entire building was dedicated for use of the restaurant.

From the beginning of the guild war to the end of it, and even when we were moving toward the restaurant, he warily kept an

eye, avoiding me as best as he could.

‘There walks my bento.’

“Hey! Hwang Jae Hyuk!”

“.....”

“What happened to the days you used to beat me up for not responding? Why are you doing it yourself?”

“Get lost. I don’t want to even speak with you.”

“Pff! You must have grown stronger since, huh?”

“You little piece of shit! You only got strong using money!”

I guess you could misinterpret my growth like that. But I was not going to be nice and explain to him that he had misunderstood.

I quietly went next to Jae Hyuk and put my hand on his shoulder.
Then.

“Do you not understand your situation? You’re going to die at this rate.”

“Urk.”

Putting a lot of strength in my hands, I squeezed his shoulder.

He could only groan pathetically at the incomparable strength since last time.

“You still think you’re the best huh?”

“G-guh. Let me go you piece of shit.”

“I told you last time? That there is no way I’m forgiving trash like you so easily. I hope you don’t ever change!”

“.....”

“Guess you don’t remember being hit last time? It was really sad to see how much pain you were in before.”

I raised my hand and move it towards his face, making him flinch

and close his eyes.

Then.

“Please stop! We’re going to be one big family, so we shouldn’t fight you know?”

Guild master Park Hyun had headed toward us.

“Ma....master.”

Soon as Jae Hyuk saw Park Hyun, he ran toward her.

‘Bullying bitch..... He must do [really well at work](#). But becoming a family? Aren’t we just guild members?’

Sucking up to the bosses.

“Mr. Min-Cheol. Let’s stop and go up to eat. Mr. Jae Hyuk should also stop this and go.”

In that short period, I felt something strange in the way Park Hyun looked at me.

Perhaps it was due to Jong Ho-hyung telling me about the rumors. It could be just me being biased.

But my guts told me that she was hiding something.

After eating out, it was 11 at night.

Since my mother was staying at home, I decided not to hunt till morning and instead head home.

While I was shaking my hand to catch a taxi on the side of the road, someone called out to me.

“Mr. Min-Cheol.”

“Yes.”

“Did you hear?”

“What...?”

“Ah, I guess you didn’t hear. All new guild members are to have an interview with me. So I asked a message to be sent asking if you

had time tomorrow, but I guess it hasn't arrived."

"Ah, then let's see each other tomorrow."

"Let's. Please come to the office at 7 in the evening."

We said our goodbyes and I went toward home.

But during the entire way, couldn't help but be suspicious.

'Do guild masters really talk this often with their members like this?'

I knew that there were several new members who joined as well.

But Park Hyun did not even give them a glance towards them.

The more I thought about it, the more I became suspicious of her.

*

Next day, 7 in the evening.

For the interview with Park Hyun, I arrived at the guild building.

I went to Park Hyun's room and knocked on the door.

"Yes, come on in."

As I opened the door and went in, Park Hyun greeted me as if happy to see me.

"Ah, Mr. Min-Cheol. Welcome. I was just about to contact you. There was no difficulty coming, right?"

"Yes, thanks to you. Thank you."

"Haha, I see. So, it was the first time you've seen a guild war, right? How was it? Wasn't it fun?"

"Yes. It was very exciting."

"Guild war is like true sports. The strong and superior become the winners, and the weak and inferior become the losers....."

As she spoke, her face looked passionate and as if reminiscing about something.

But what I saw was a slight childlike madness.

“If a winner and loser is decided, I guess that would make it similar to sports.”

After that.

Many insignificant questions and answers continued.

Then.

“Ah, when Mr. Min-Cheol was younger, is it true your father passed away?”

‘What? Did she check my background? Since it’s something you can learn about just by looking up my life history record, should I be worried?’

“Yes, that’s right. At the age of 12.”

“Rumors say that it was due to debt.”

“Yes.”

“How was it for you?”

“Well, I have no emotions toward it.”

“Hm, did you not get along with your father?”

“.....”

“Ah, I’m sorry. Since I’m interested in Mr. Min-Cheol, I have lots of questions about you. My apologies if I was rude.”

“Ah, it’s fine.”

“Thank you. I also kind of feel bad for your father. But if the weak owes the strong, and is unable to pay the debt, they should take responsibility. I find this world ruled by the law of the jungle. From that point of view, I guess I could see your dad as a sacrifice. Don’t you agree?”

“.....”

Hearing her question, I asked while closing my past.

“Sorry but, what are you trying to get at?”

“Ah, I became too serious. Sorry. I just wanted to know how you were doing, but I went off track.”

“School and hunting, I do not do either excessively or with negligence.”

“I see. Then we’ll end the interview here. Please come to the guild often, I have great expectations of you.”

“Yes. Then I’ll be going.”

After the conversation, Park Hyun had the intern secretary escort me home safely.

On the ride back, there was no conversation, but perhaps due to the feats performed yesterday, I felt a silent pressure.

I’ve felt it before, but he really did stay emotionless without an expression. Due to the sunglasses he always wore, I could never tell what he was thinking.

*

“I’m back.”

“Ah. For what reason has my son returned home so early?”

“We haven’t had a day together after you quit work. I came so we could spend time together.”

Even while talking, she went to the kitchen to grab a metal pot and rice cooker, and asked.

“That’s my son. Did you eat yet? You should eat.”

“No, I already ate. What did you do today? What’s that in the living room?”

“Ah, that? Staying at home all day made me bored so I took some small jobs near here.”

“Ah, I told you to get some rest instead of doing that. Your son earns well!”

My mother couldn't help but laugh with happiness at my complaints.

"Just hearing that from you makes me feel strong! I'm doing it because I'm bored so don't you worry and go take a shower."

"Don't do work like that but do something fun that you want to do. Like the mothers that you see on TV that draw or do flower arranging. I'll take a quick shower and come back out."

*

After checking that my mother went to her room, I went into my room and laid on the bed.

The words Park Hyun said.

What objective in mind did she say those words with.

It wasn't an interest you showed toward a new guild member, and it caused me great distress.

Jong Ho's words that Noblesse has connections with radical groups came to mind again.

The part that really stuck in my mind was how she said the weak being crushed was the natural course of things.

Perhaps she plans to drag me into the radical group?

Is that why she offered those ridiculously beneficial conditions for me when asking me to join?

Does that mean she knows my ability? How much of it?

Perhaps that's how all the guild members are, or perhaps there is a different reason. I needed more detailed and credible information.

Jae Hyuk would be coming to school tomorrow. Since he missed any more days, he would not be able to meet the required days to attend and possibly have his Awakened license be revoked.

"If I interrogate him, perhaps something will come out?"

Despite Jae Hyuk not being in the guild for a long time, but I thought I could get at least a little bit of information out of him.

Ending my thoughts, I left a text for Jong Ho.

‘Hyung, I need you to help me. I have a question about something you told me yesterday.

Please pick me up after school. There’s something I need to tell you.’

Honestly, I didn’t completely trust Jong Ho.

But I was relying on him because there was no one else in this situation who had that much information and connections.

Of course there were Sangmin and his party, but they were part of the Noblesse guild.

If I asked information from them and they had the same views as Park Hyun, I could be in deep trouble. They were my ‘enemies’ for now.

For tomorrow’s hunting, I tended to my uneasy heart and fell asleep.

Chapter 23 - Noblesse Guild (4)

After Min-Cheol left the guild, Park Hyun summoned all the Noblesse guild's vice leaders to the office.

Sitting at the end of a huge office table, Park Hyun opened her mouth.

“Is everyone here?”

“Yes!”

“Good. Today, we will be discussing about the capture of Noblesse's new guild member, Min-Cheol.”

Guild master Park Hyun – Her responsibilities wasn't just to be a guild master of Noblesse.

She was a comrade of the radical forces, in charge of supplying them with new members.

Capturing guild members under her, or using debt owed to force others to work towards a world only for the Awakened was what she did.

Park Hyun continued.

“There could be people who do not understand his existence, so could you explain briefly, Mr. Sangmin?”

“Yes master.”

With Park Hyun's words, Sangmin stood up and spoke zealously similar to a private in front of their commander.

“When did you meet with Min-Cheol?”

“About 3 months ago.”

“What was his level then?”

“He said it was 13.”

“I see. But before you entered a level 12 dungeon together, he

used Lightning Spray?”

“Yes master. Despite the weapon, equipment, and accessories being a useless disguise that didn’t provide anything, he was able to use Lightning Spray 4 times. Suspicious if he was lying to us, we entered the dungeon together, and I saw that his body glowed when he finished the manticore hunt. He had leveled up.”

“For the week after that you hunted together, and he continued to level up, correct?”

“Yes, that’s right. Seems he has some incredible ability.”

“Good. Thank you. Let’s hear one more. Mr. Hwang Jae Hyuk?”

From the corner of the room, Hwang Jae Hyuk showed the same zealous movement like Sangmin did.

Jae Hyuk and Sangmin both did not have the rights to attend the meeting of vice leaders, but they were attending because they were needed for this meeting.

“Yes master!”

“You’re in the same class as Min-Cheol, right?”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“Can you explain what you saw, Mr. Jae Hyuk?”

Hesitating for a bit, he gave in to the pressure of all the attention on him and spoke.

“Originally, Min-Cheol wasn’t anyone important at school since he wasn’t Awakened. Only useful for being a bread train. After the summer break though, he became stronger than me when he came back to school, and I was Awakened a year ago.”

“Good. So that means that within one month, Min-Cheol grew to meet what you accomplished in a year, right?”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“How did you find out?”

“That... On the first day, we got into a fight and despite fighting fiercely, I lost in the end.”

“Thank you, Mr. Jae Hyuk. Mr. Jae Hyuk and Mr. Sangmin, please wait a moment.”

Jae Hyuk sat with a red face that looked like it was about to explode from embarrassment.

“When I first saw Min-Cheol, it was after he had soloed a Kelvecore. Of course he was injured to the point of death, but someone who had only been an Awakened for less than a month had completed a level 12 dungeon and the hidden boss as well.”

With Park Hyun’s words, the office became unsettled.

“We do not know of his exact ability, but there is a portion we can guess. An incredible amount of magic regeneration!”

“You’re saying that a passive regarding mana regen exists?”

“How could it be.”

Park Hyun spoke.

“For now, it is merely an assumption, but we can find out the truth if we can turn him to our side. Whatever his ability is, it is without a doubt that it carries an incredible amount of hidden potential.”

“If he declines.....”

Park Hyun looked straight into the eyes of secretary Lee Jae Young as she answered his question.

“Well, we’d have to take care of it following protocol. If a kitten grows into a tiger and sides with the government... That would be a headache. So we’ll kill him.”

To her killing intent, everyone in the office couldn’t help but become tense.

The questions continued, as if to shake off the mood.

“Do you have any good ideas to turn him to our cause?”

“He’s currently obsessed with money. He’s struggling to part with being poor.”

“.....”

“The reason why he joined Noblesse was for money! To get the sword, that is.”

“At this rate of growth, he’ll be able to obtain a huge sum of money within months. Will he just accept the deal that easily?”

“Apologies to everyone, but I will be offering an incredible sum of money.”

All the members in the office became uneasy.

Everyone thought, ‘how much will she pay a greenhorn who just became an Awakened?’

“20 billion! Even if he is able to understand his potential, it will be difficult to decline an amount that he hasn’t even been able to see his entire life. If this method doesn’t work, I have one other plan.”

“What is it?”

“Using his only family member... His mother.”

“We’re going to use his mother as a hostage?”

Hearing the question, Park Hyun gave chilling smile.

“We can’t rush and make him our enemy. The only thing we have to do is this. Just have to show that his mother was injured or killed due to a non-Awakened member who is a high ranking personnel in the government. Then naturally, he will become enraged towards the useless government, no?”

It was too much to handle for most of how easily Park Hyun treated people’s lives like flies or ants.

The meeting was over and all participants left.

Sangmin and Jae Hyuk who had connections to Min-Cheol were the only ones left waiting in the office.

“Mr. Sangmin and Mr. Jae Hyuk, your roles are crucial. Whether you have a positive or a negative relationship with Min-Cheol, you are the only guild members with a connection toward him, so I’m trusting you to make this offer to him.”

“Yes master.”

“I understand.”

“Please keep an eye on every move he makes. And no matter what happens, you cannot give our identity away. Until the prepared plan works out perfectly.....”

“Understood.”

Both answered with zeal.

“Then, I ask of you. Together, for tomorrow’s glory!”

To Park Hyun’s raised arm, both shouted with a fist on their own chest.

“For glory!”

“For glory!”

Jae Hyuk had not been recognized in the guild or the radical faction. With advice from the guild, he joined, but he did not accomplish anything of note.

So he saw Park Hyun’s words as a chance.

‘If I am able to capture this little shit..... Wouldn’t it be a big accomplishment? Finally, I get an opportunity. An opportunity to secure my position!’

Her instructions were already forgotten, blinded by the desire to succeed.

After the conversation was over, Park Hyun sent Sangmin and Jae Hyuk back.

Park Hyun, now seemingly alone, tilted back her chair and spoke to the ceiling.

“Jin.”

The shadow of a desk in the corner of the office started to distort.

A man’s form, as if a puff of smoke, appeared.

His nickname was ‘Jin’, and he had the same ranking in the rebellion as Park Hyun.

With a plain smile fading from his face, he went towards Park Hyun and spoke.

“Seems I heard something interesting.”

“It is as you heard. I need you to go out there.”

“You need me to handle the little brat?”

“No, please keep an eye on the two I just sent.”

“Ku ku kuk, you are vile as ever.”

“It’s an important job for the mission. Jin, you’ll have to act with prudence.”

“Sure. If both of them betray or try to leak information, I will take care of them according to our creed.”

After finishing what he had to say, he hid himself into the shadows again.

“Whether or not the recruitment for Min-Cheol will succeed depends on how much of a good catalyst those two will be.”

Chapter 24 - Noblesse Guild (5)

After school ended, Jong Ho's SUV was waiting at the front gate.

Next to the vehicle, I could see Jong Ho leaning towards the sun roof with his arm as support.

'Uwaa! Shitty fashion! Please don't act as if you know me, please don't look this way! Please!'

Different from what I hoped for, he waved his hands towards me.

"Yo! Min-Cheol! Over here, right here!"

'It's that shitty white t-shirt again.'

Instead of answering, I increased my pace towards Jong Ho.

"Iya, it's been a long time since I went to a school. But why do I see dull men for the most part and only a few female students?"

"Please stop lollygagging and get in the car quickly!"

"Why! Why! Are you being chased?"

Jong Ho was looking around as if it was a scene in a spy movie.

"Hyung, I'm really embarrassed at your fashion sense. Please get in!"

"Ah, is that it. Only wearing student uniforms, to be with a fashionista like me, are you embarrassed that we're suddenly getting attention? I guess you're young and all."

"....."

Ending the conversation that made me red with embarrassment, we went to the parking lot near Jong Ho's vehicle.

"Hyung. When hyung called me yesterday, you went to the outing after the guild war?"

"Yes. There's nothing much to worry about. But what about the text message yesterday?"

I told Jong Ho the conversation with Park Hyun and the current situation.

“Hm... We’re going to be like family. The strong and superior win, while the weak and inferior becomes the loser.....”

I asked a question to Jong Ho who was talking to himself and fidgeting with the sand on the floor.

“Don’t you feel something?”

“It’s something I was told before from the hyungs I used to work for, but I didn’t pay attention to it that much. Hearing your words now though, something seems off.”

“I have a hunch that it is the radical faction, but I don’t know how much of Noblesse guild is involved, or if everyone is.”

“Since the government isn’t accusing the group, either the guild has incredible power or they leave no loose ends.”

“Taking care of business?”

Jong Ho, while looking straight at me, replied to my question.

“Min-Cheol. Do you know how many become Awakened and disappear?”

“No clue.”

“300 per year! About 500 people become Awakened if there are a lot Awakening that year. But more than 40% aren’t able to pass 5 years, disappearing.”

“Isn’t it because they die to either the portal explosion or monsters in dungeons?”

“Of course it could be that. Let’s say an Awakened that’s only been one for 1 to 2 years died in dungeons, that’s no surprise. But what about people past 5 years, people with levels above 100, with knowledge and experience to match it? There is no reason why they would die so easily, right?”

“That’s true.”

“The official reason of death would be ‘death due to monsters within a dungeon’, but if it’s a dungeon where you can’t even find the corpse after despawn time, there is something a lot more sinister occurring.”

“That is to say, there are murders happening in dungeons. And among those murdered, there could be people who are against the radical forces?”

“Bingo.”

After hearing Jong Ho’s words, I realized that I was in a precarious situation.

“No time to dillydally. Hyung! Let’s go to the association.”

“What? You want to report this?”

“No. Going to buy ‘Gravity Laser’.”

“Eh? Is that your solution for this situation?”

*

I was able to purchase ‘Gravity Laser’, ‘Heal’, and ‘Spirit Armor’ from the association.

Since Heal and Spirit Armor were both beginner necromancer’s skill, they were being sold for cheap.

Since I couldn’t forsake attack or defense, I used all the money I had to do so.

As sunset approached, Jong Ho said that he had a hunting party he promised to attend and left.

Unlike others, Jong Ho did not ask for favors in return despite seeing how strong I was, taking out all the succubi.

Jong Ho said that he’ll try to get more information on Noblesse guild.

Since he could suffer the consequences for snooping around too

deep, I did not forget to warn him to pull out at a reasonable time.

“If you exclude how he dresses, he’s an amazing person.”

While talking to myself and looking at him leave, I planned ahead.

There were only rumors at the moment, as the government wasn’t doing anything and there wasn’t a single shred of evidence. Taking that into account, the radical faction was not something to mess with.

If I went to report, it was obvious that I’d become a target.

My only and dangerous option is left.

Until Park Hyun and the rebellion forces make their move, I will only focus on growing stronger.

If they move faster than I predicted, I’ll pretend to help them and buy time. Waiting until I’m able to surpass them.....

Since I was able to obtain a higher amount of exp in the level 13 dungeon using the ‘Bloodsucking Revival’ and ‘Incubus’ Revival’, I had to give up on level 14 and 15 dungeons that could give higher ranking blood stones and gear for now.

It was because the money I was earning now was nothing compared to how much I’ll be earning after my growth.

“Compiling done. Let’s go level up!”

*

The new skill I learned, Gravity Laser, was an incredible skill.

In the area I target, a dome shaped similar to a ‘Barrier’ is formed, shooting out countless laser beams.

Since it was a skill that continuously drained mana to attack until the enemy perished, I could increase the skill level incredibly quickly.

It was a skill that fit my ability the best.

An attack that continuously drained mana and destructive force to match it!

Even though it wasn't able to damage the level 13 dungeon's succubi, it was able to target.

Casting Piercing Sword with one hand while the other hand holds Gravity Laser that can continuously attack!

I did not forget to cast Frozen Shield, Barrier, and Spirit armor and let myself get hit between Piercing Sword to obtain experience for shield skills.

Due to the rebellion faction, I had to give up earning more money, but instead gained an incredible amount of speed in growth.

Different from my expectations, there was no movement from Park Hyun.

If I could continue to buy time like this and grow stronger, I could step on those who dare to threaten me.

However, I just wanted to earn more money instead of wasting time like this.

‘Come at me! Come get me!’

Chapter 25 - Growth. Revenge.

Level: 88
Exp: [25,254,600/47,163,790]
Class: Magician
Special Trait: Does not run out of mana.
Strength: [305+20+30+200+55] 610

Mana: ∞
Dexterity: 10
Stamina: 150
Unspent Skill Points: 0

Owned Skills
Orb of Chilling Lv. 35 [16,244/320,000]
Lightning Spray Lv. 78 [128,456/750,000]
Eye of the Storm Lv. 54 [88,243/510,000]
Piercing Sword Lv. 99 [680/960,000]
Gravity Laser Lv. 61 [361,546/580,000]
Frozen Shield Lv. 66 [134,890/630,000]
Spirit Armor Lv. 52 [24,455/490,000]
Heal Lv. 1 [0/100]

“Whew, guess I’ll stop for today?”

The usual hunting ended.

Power leveling for over 12 hours a day.

If I didn’t continue to use skills to level them up, even if my

passive gave me endless mana, it would be useless.

The level 13 dungeon was immune to magic damage, but by hitting all the targets with spells from one hand while the other hand casting Piercing Sword to finish them off, I was able to continue leveling up the magic spells.

I was able to grow and increase my skills at a rate that cannot be followed. No, at a rate that cannot be thought possible.

October was coming.

Since I only had to attend the mandatory required days for school, I was thinking of making this my last week of attendance.

After that, a special break time for a month for me, who has lived a life without being late or absent.

And since it continues into winter break, I would be able to obtain nearly three months to focus completely on growth.

If I was able to focus on growth for 90 days, I should be able to obtain results far greater than what I have been able to obtain.

I currently had one 'Awakened Essence' in my possession.

I was able to obtain it by hunting the incubus.

Other than that, I was able to obtain 'Shaman's Ring' and 'Magician's Insight Bracelet' through hunting.

Since they all raised my mana, I could sell them without hesitation.

I could get more money selling it on the web rather than at the market, so made deals directly with buyers online.

I guessed it would happen, but one of the three offers was a fraud.

He confirmed the stats of the bracelet and casually invited me to a dungeon with the excuse of wanting to purchase it.

He was not only aiming for my bracelet, but also the Heugdo and

the skull ring.

Seems he tried to trick me without noticing my level, which is lazy on his part since you needed identification paperwork to use the trade site.

On the profile, the day you've received the Awakened identification paperwork is written.

His date was December, 2014.

Since I became Awakened three months ago, he's underestimating and targeting me.

Not sure if he's still alive.

I grabbed him and casted all my shields, then set Gravity Laser to 1m while casting Piercing Sword with my free hand with reckless abandon.

Then I beat the mobs and walked out by myself.

Even though I hit him until he was at death's door..... I'll leave the rest to heaven's will.

It was a trade that could've been dangerous, but there was something I learned.

'If I needed someone beaten and silenced so that my identity is not found out, head to the dungeon'.

Piercing Sword's level was at 99.

Soon, it should reach level 100.

With a skill of this ranking and destructive force, I wanted to Awaken it.

Another reason was because I witnessed Park Hyun's secretary displaying immense power with his Awakened Piercing Sword.

Searching, I was able to find out information regarding the Awakened Essence. An incredibly low chance to drop from regular

mobs, and a low chance for it to drop from hidden bosses.

There was no market for this item, no trade offers or of it being sold.

It was probably because everyone used it for themselves instead of selling it, being incredibly rare and all.

“Hm... Guess I’ll have to visit a expert in this field...”

Using the communicator, I heard a man’s voice.

“Hyung. What are you doing?”

“Ah, Min-Cheol. Hyung is selling blood stones at the market. Why do you ask?”

“When are you done? I have some questions for you.”

“Go ahead and ask. What is it?”

“You know of ‘Awakened Essence’? The thing you use to Awaken skills. Do you know where I can get some?”

“You can get it if you defeat the bosses. Did I already tell you this before?”

“That I know already, but do you know anywhere that has a higher drop rate? Like a special dungeon or specific conditions.”

“Oh. Aren’t you asking too much? Ahem! One thing I am sure of is that levels don’t matter. There was a group of people who just became Awakened clearing a level 1 dungeon as a group of 6, killing the ‘Ghost King’ and obtaining the essence, instantly becoming rich. Thus the level of the boss or dungeon does not matter.”

“So it may be better to do lower level dungeons quickly?”

“That’s it for today! I’m not selling information today.”

“I understand. Let’s talk more if we can, Hyung.”

“Yes, do your best.”

His amorous and exuberant voice only added onto the high class

information he provided, like sweet honey.

“Hm... So as long as I take down the boss, the level doesn't matter.”

Ending the call with Jong Ho, I wanted to immediately run towards the level 1 dungeon.

If I wore the boots of swiftness, I could clear the dungeon at incredible speeds.

However, I'd have to give up on growing stronger and the high level drops.

The one I had was going to be used for Piercing Sword.

The next spell to awaken after hitting level 100 skill points would be Gravity Laser.

So until then, I decided to obtain an Awakened Essence.

Because growing stronger was the priority.

October 4th is my mother's birthday.

For that day, I was preparing a present for her.

Not the house she's living in now, but a house build with the new material.

An incredibly expensive price, aimed at Awakened or family members of the Awakened, able to withstand attacks from most monsters. A sturdy safe house.

I could not help but worry for my mother, since I spent most my time hunting while my mother stayed at home alone.

But if I was able to get a house like this, I could stop worrying and focus on hunting.

It was the high price of 4 million, but it was nothing compared to the cost of magician skill books.

The rare drops of items and with blood stones...

With all the money I've earned till now and how much I will be continuing to earn in the future, I should be able to sign the contract by her birthday.

With only two weeks left, I went home with happy thoughts about how it will be a wonderful surprise present.

The air at dawn after a hunt is always refreshing.

Heading toward my apartment room, I rode the elevator.

“Huh? Why is the door open?”

Chapter 26 - Growth. Revenge. (2)

With an anxious heart, I headed in.

Without fail, my intuition for misfortune was spot on.

There were three pairs of shoes at the entrance.

I recalled the hooligans from before.

The midget and his goon were sitting in the living room.

They sat there with their feet up as if owning the place.

One thing that put my mind at ease was that my mother was standing tall and proud without fear in front of those hooligans.

It was something so incredibly different from what it was like two months ago.

I could no longer see my mother bowing her head in apology.

It was a welcoming sight to see.

It was then while I saw the situation unfold before me.

The small fry lean his head forward and told my mother.

“Hey. Mrs. Pak Se-Ran. If you had the money to buy a house like this, shouldn’t you be paying off the debt to us? Since it looks like your son is an Awakened and is able to earn money.”

“Huh? Honored? Why are thieves talking about honor?”

“What? Since I’m saying this nicely, are you looking down on me?”

The small fry pulled out an envelope from his breast pocket and raised his voice.

“Look at this. It’s the loan agreement with your name on it! I helped you following the law! I have the right to receive my money.”

“I heard that my son gave you 1 million. And before that, he even

gave you 10 million won. We already paid off more than half of it before that. So why are you barging in at another person's house this early in the morning, you thug?"

"Do you think this is a charity? Even banks have interests on loans. Do you think that I am digging the ground to earn money? Are my words not getting through to you, bitch?"

It wasn't a time for me to just stand still.

I couldn't help but move the moment he said 'bitch.'

Instead of saying that, he should have said, 'Pak Se-Ran, Pak Se-Ran banzai! Please show us mercy.'

Tossing my luggage at the entrance with a 'took', I walked towards the midget and the hooligans.

When my mother saw me, she gave me a small but strong smile.

"So you guys came back again? I didn't drag my feet and gave you the money, why are you coming back and bothering us?"

"Haah. You don't have any manners. Did you win the lottery? Aren't you acting a little bit crazy? Kid, do you not see the adults behind me? It looks like you're not afraid of anything just because you're Awakened. But, if you don't want to end up in a cold coffin like your father, then shut up and give me the money!"

As soon as his words ended, the two goons who were only watching cracked their necks and stared at me.

Thinking back, when I was helpless and couldn't do anything before, my rage boiled over.

If the anger was directed at myself previously, now it became anger that made me question how to crush these bastards.

And then.

The anger that I had towards them changed to a feeling of superiority and bemusement.

The guys that I couldn't even approach before now were below me.

Clearing my thoughts, I gave out a fake laughter.

“Ha! Are you a bunch of thugs? How much money do you get a month doing this? Why don't you use this time to hunt instead of sucking this midget's ass hole?”

“Haah...”

One of the two gave a fake laughter back as it didn't make any sense to him.

I was always ready to fight.

‘Come here, you bitches, are you weak? Guess I'll have to teach you a lesson.’

“Ah, does it not make sense that a child is talking like an adult? I'm right. Looking at you two, it looks like you're level 60-70 Awakened and can earn over 1 million won even if you can't hunt very well. Isn't it true? Or did I overestimate you all?”

“Do you want to die, bitch?!”

Looks like those two became angry at what I said for they walked towards me with their arms folded.

‘Okay.’

Without a hitch, they moved as I predicted.

But then.

“Wait.”

The midget stopped the angry goons.

“If Awakened fight in a household like this, it'll cause big problems. We are pure, innocent people who follow the law dutifully.”

With a smile that could sicken the heaven and earth, he looked towards me and my mother.

“Oh, isn’t your son so brave! Isn’t he, mother Pak Se-Ran? You must be so happy to have a son like this. As the senior to life, I should have a quiet conversation with your son. What do you say, child?”

I could tell what he was thinking, it was obvious.

This was a household in the center of the city and it involved my mother who wasn’t an Awakened.

If we made a ruckus in a situation like this, then the Awakened clean-up task force will be dispatched and would cause more complication.

He was probably trying to set this up because he was afraid that the ‘legal’ acts they were doing would be exposed.

It was obvious that he was trying to take me to a dungeon or someplace shady like that to dispose of me.

‘It’s a situation I can’t even laugh about. Yeah! If I killed them here, then it would become complicated. Let’s go somewhere nicer. It wasn’t that long ago that I bought the sofa and the television.’

Even though I was thinking about how I would convince these guys to go to the dungeon so I could dispose of them, they already did the work for me.

“Sure.”

“I’m glad that you’re brave, let’s go.”

Hearing my answer, my mother showed nervousness on her face.

She knew about my growth, but was uncomfortable about how I was being dragged along by vile villains.

Instead of answering or giving her an explanation, I gave her a wink.

Looking at my cheesy expression, she smiled as if her heart was reassured.

She looked at the window without a word.

I entered the car owned by the midget that was parked in the parking lot in front of the house.

Similar to a criminal having been caught by the police, the shorter goon sat in the driver seat while the taller goon and the midget sandwiched me in the rear seats.

Since they could attack me at any time, I didn't let down my guard.

Since the Heugdo was a sword that the blacksmith made, it was impossible for them to know the abilities of my sword.

As we drove through the streets for a long time, the midget that was sitting on my left opened his mouth.

“How long have you been Awakened for?”

“Three months or so?”

“Kukuku, three months? Have you heard about the manticore? We're going to the level 11th dungeon. Since you'll have to become stronger in order to pay off the debt quicker, right?”

‘...Haah. This doesn't make any sense. It's like promising an elementary kid that you'll buy them pork cutlets but finding out that they were taking them to the hospital instead. Are you really trying to bait me with something like candy?’

Thinking about what would happen afterwards, I wanted to laugh whole heartedly but held it all in and pretended to know nothing.

“Oh yes, are you trying to helping me out?”

“Of course! That's what we're trying to do.”

After all the driving, we reached in front of the level 12th dungeon.

It wasn't like the dungeon that I ran as if eating meals, but

instead was a dungeon in a place far away from civilization in the middle of a forest path.

Saying that they would take a quick smoke break, they headed towards the corner.

Of course, they were probably discussing how to get rid of me.

I was unable to hear what they said.

While I was waiting for them, one word I recalled the midget said was the ‘refrigerator.’

I thought that the rotten bastards were not only doing illegal loans but were also involved in murder.

How far did these guys fall to give fear to people in similar situation like mine, or perhaps to do something even more sinister.

Well, it doesn’t matter.

The only thing in my head was that while we’re here at an isolated place like this, then it was a chance for me to not only dispose of the midget but also the other two hooligans.

After throwing down the cigarette and extinguishing it by stepping on it, they yelled at me.

“Alright, let’s go in!”

“Of course, let’s go. Let’s go.”

‘I struggled to think of how to raise my Heal skill level, so until I go to school, I guess I’ll perform nightingale bing-ui.’

Chapter 27 - Growth. Revenge. (3)

The dungeon formed.

With the hooligans, I showed my Awakened ID for verification.

Only the two hooligans and I entered the dungeon since the midget was not an Awakened and was thus unable to enter the dungeon.

The midget who was taking a smoke break next to his car parked near the entrance of the dungeon smirked and said.

“Farewell, kid.”

‘A-ha. So you were planning to send me off like that? Did you need fresh organs or something? It wouldn’t be a funny story if I was done in like this. I’m planning to rewrite the ending of this story. So please wait a little and die afterwards.’

“I’ll see you in a bit.”

With those last words, I entered the dungeon.

Throughout the dungeon, I could hear the snarling of the manticores.

It was a noise that I’ve grown tired of, but today, it sounded different.

Right now I was wondering how those two would act.

Would they bring the monsters to me?

Or would they attack me even before hunting?

My curiosity was answered before ten seconds passed.

“This little kid, didn’t you have quite the mouth?”

“Acting all mighty! If it wasn’t for the boss, I would have killed you on the spot.”

It appears what I said to those two back at the house wasn’t so

lightly taken.

Each of them saying what they wanted to say, they showed their true colors.

One of them pulled out a dagger that was hidden behind his back.

The other one pulled out knuckles with sharp blades and equipped them.

‘Assassin and warrior huh.’

“Oh, why are the hyungs so angry at me?”

“Shut up, you haughty son of a bitch. Why’d you let your mouth run, all you had to do was pay off your debt quietly! You dug your own grave, don’t blame me too much.”

“Blame the fact that you were born in the age of criminals.”

“Pfft, so you want to 2v1 me right now?”

As soon as my words fell, I quickly casted a shield just in case of a sudden attack.

Looking at the opaque Frozen Shield being formed around my body, they laughed out at me.

“Puhahaha! You’re really going to try to block me with that?”

“Aah, what’s up with the sword in your hand? Seeing that you’re casting Frozen Shield, you must be a magician. Did you bring the sword to play war?”

They laughed at me who was a magician holding onto a black sword.

Without changing my expression, I spoke with boldness.

“Aah, you’re talking too much. I won’t let you die so easily, it’ll be difficult, but enjoy yourselves.”

“I’ll stab my sword through that skull of yours!”

With a dash, at the same time as his words ended, he casted

Dagger Throw and threw his dagger with great speed.

His short sword against my level 66 Frozen Shield broke apart pathetically similar to rotten wood being struck with metal.

The other small fry who saw this occur must have panicked because he rushed at me desperately while casting Enchant on his knuckles.

“Yaaa!”

His fists which were red with trails of fire made an incredible noise each time it flew through the air.

As his knuckles struck against my Frozen Shield, it created steam and the shield was chipped.

“Oh-ho? So you can throw some decent punches? But did you turn the fire off at your house? You should save energy.”

‘Lightning Spray!’

Condensed lightning on each of my hands shot out towards them.

“Ahh!”

The whites of their eyes were showing and they were shaking uncontrollably.

“It doesn’t seem like you’re going to die from just this.”

Was it because of the Lightning Spray skill level?

The two of them were easily rendered half unconscious.

This occurred with just one cast.

While they were losing their consciousness, I stabbed Heugdo into one of their arms.

“Ku... ku-ahh!”

With the hand that was holding onto the sword, I condensed lightning, and the other hand casted Heal.

It was only a level 1 Heal, but since the skill had no cooldown, I could infinitely heal him.

As his eyes became focused, I casted Heal on the other guy to have him conscious again.

I was almost surprised that there was this sort of cruelty inside of me.

But after my father's death, these were the guys that tortured me and my mother for years.

They were disgusting faces that had made me suffer being poor and helpless.

Their faces, I remembered them one by one, and with the revenge I took, these were the unfortunate victims.

I did not want to give them an easy death.

I wanted them to feel the pain that my mother and I felt.

"Are you two awake now?"

"This... Son of a bitch..."

"I guess the rag that was in your mouth hasn't been spat out yet."

As he regained his consciousness, the warrior reequipped on his knuckles and spat out curses.

Through Heugdo that was embedded in the assassin's arm, I casted Lightning Spray, the assassin was once again knocked out.

Their only attacks were only generic strikes with the edges of their sword.

His attacks were all being absorbed completely.

"Since you might die while I'm electrocuting you as if lighting a street lamp, I'll keep healing you, here you go."

Watching the horrific display occurring before him, as soon as my words finished, he realized that something was very wrong.

Receiving the lightning throughout his entire body, he was frothing at the mouth and there was no movement.

He's probably not dead yet, though.

My gaze shifted to the warrior.

"S-spare me...!"

"Of course, of course, I'll let you live, that's why I'm giving you heal, to let you live on."

"Waaah! Please!"

I didn't attack him with anything else but Lightning Spray, but he looked like he lost his mind looking at his partner pathetically defeated on the ground.

Thinking of the level of Piercing Sword and Gravity Laser, if I casted those on them, they'd die instantly.

It was disappointing that I didn't learn more skills beforehand.

There was not much of a level difference between me and them.

But look at the results, they couldn't even attack once properly and were on the floor begging to be spared.

A result from just the skill level!

Different from how regular Awakened could raise their skill level with their limited mana, I was on a whole different dimension when it came to abilities.

In the future, I'll obtain Meteor Call, Magma Pool and other high ranking spells.

I was almost scared of myself.

"Hey, there's still 50 minutes left, your friend is sleeping so peacefully, but you're still so lively. Why are you sweating so much? Does your stomach hurt? Are you uncomfortable?"

He couldn't even look at me in the eyes, kneeling on the ground and biting his nails.

‘If he’s sweating because it’s hot, let’s treat him to some shaved ice.’

Towards his upper and lower body as well as all his joints, I casted Frost Orb.

To the pain that he was receiving from his joints being frozen over, he could not even let out a squeak.

But I was absolutely not going to kill him or cripple him.

They were an Awakened like me.

They must have strengthened their bodies with points in stamina and agility.

The effect that you would receive from agility wasn’t only dodge ability.

It also increases status debuff resistance.

Over time, that level of frost bite would be cured.

The reason why I did not raise any points in agility was because I was able to cast all sorts of shields at my pleasure.

If that was the case, then a situation where I would get hurt wouldn’t exist in the first place.

If I was able to use a shield that used up 10 times the mana of other shields, even if there was a cooldown?

I would never be done in by anyone.

“While ahjussi eats the shaved ice, I should probably wake up the other guy sprawled on the ground over here. There’s good news. My Heal level is rising, thus the next 50 minutes can feel like 50 years to you guys.”

While I was glaring at the guy who was frozen, both of my hands were continuously casting Heal on the collapsed goon.

“St-stop!! Gaaah!”

Chapter 28 - Growth. Revenge. (4)

How long has it been?

My gaze shifted towards my watch.

There was only about 20 minutes left before the dungeon closes.

The guys that became ragged like a bunch of dirty washcloth after 30 minutes of lesson were tossed into the corner of the dungeon.

To leave the dungeon, I had to clear all the monsters.

Within 10 minutes, the dungeon center was filled with manticores' red bloodstones.

Thinking that the exit would open, I turned around.

Suddenly, in the level 12th dungeon that I visited after two months, a kelvecore appeared.

'Aah, if I knew this would happen, I would have beaten those two son of bitches a little less.'

Ten minutes left.

With the growth I've achieved, I should be able to take care of it easily.

Hunting the kelvecore last time, I was able to obtain a bloodstone, a soulstone, a jewel and a skillbook.

I was looking towards to the rare drops again.

Its powerful breath and poison sting that once put me in danger no longer affected me.

Not giving it any space and attacking it at close range while circling around it, I did not allow it to show off its main range attacks.

It didn't take long for it to die, accompanied by a howl that was always awful to hear.

The blood stone that floated above it gave a magnificent glow like always.

Without a doubt, the skillbook and soul stone dropped.

Matching the title of hidden boss, it seemed to be very polite.

‘Okay. Seems like I got some spending money.’

Since there was not much time until the dungeon closed, I put off checking the skillbook and picked up the drops, walking towards the two guys on the floor.

After healing them completely, we headed toward the exit at the center of the dungeon.

To the guys who are keeping their distance without a word, I asked them a question.

Of course, I didn’t forget to keep my shields up.

“Was it a good time?”

“.....”

“.....”

With a smile, I asked them while looking at that straight in the eyes, and they reacted naturally with fear, looking down at the ground.

I was someone who had witnessed succubi murdering people.

I will not kill these people today.

But all the wrongdoings they committed cannot be repaid in a single hour.

Quickly arriving at the exit, I stopped them and asked.

“Hey. How much did you say I owe?”

“.....”

“Ha.... Please don’t make me ask twice, hurry up and answer.”

“Yes... Yes! The leftover debt is 4.1 billion.”

“4.1 billion? Wow, you people sure are something. The original debt was 200 million won, but now it’s 4.1 billion? The midget outside, he’s the CEO?”

“Yes....”

“Even if I don’t pay the debt, there’s not big issue, right?”

“T-that’s...”

From the hand that held my sword, the sound of my knuckles popping could be heard as I waited for their answer.

Hearing that, they were shaking in fear.

“Alright, I want to go out there and bring that midget to near death. But that guy isn’t an Awakened, so heal doesn’t work on him. If I even hit him a little, he’ll die quickly. What do you suggest?”

“What are you saying.”

“What am I saying? There is 4 minutes before the dungeon closes, so are you going to give me an answer I like so you can go through the exit and survive, or will you perish with the dungeon is what I’m asking!”

Then the smaller warrior class goon quickly opened his mouth.

“W-we’ll take care of everything. Please spare our lives.”

“It’s an answer that I like, but you guys aren’t the CEO. He’s the owner, right? To be honest, I was going to pay back the original amount due to my conscience. That is until you all came and threw quite a fit.”

“... Honestly speaking, our boss can’t do anything either.”

“Ah, is that so. Then please be a CEO in the next life.”

I casted Piercing Sword.

The swords surrounded the two.

Since it was a skill that followed my will, it did not attack them.

“Take care.”

With those words, I tried to turn around, looking cool.

Then.

“N-no! That’s not it. We’ll take care of it.”

To the fools who were flailing about in panic, I gave them an offer.

“Then let’s do this.”

“Eh?”

“Hold, Bind, and Fire Shock.”

“... What are you saying?”

“There is 50 million won left on the original amount I owe. For beating the hell out of you today, I’ll give you 500 million won. These three skill books plus forgoing the rest of the debt, how about it?” Since the skill books will cost only 400 million won, it works out fine, right? You’re slow to answer... Do I need to cast Meteor’s Call so you’ll answer?”

“That’s not it! I’ll obtain all three skill books for you.”

“Of course you will. We have come to an agreement on the trade, but if your boss shows his ugly mug again near my house... You know what happens then, right?”

“Yes, yes!”

“Please obtain them within a week. Then we’ll be leaving now.”

Out of the three skill books, Hold and Bind wasn’t very expensive.

But they were almost never sold. A skill book with an incredibly low rate of dropping.

If there is a lack of supply, the price will naturally rise.

But for the effect the skill provided, the mana cost was too high

and the duration was too low, so it was rated as a weak skill.

From what I've searched online, the official site did not have any up for trade.

However, I thought if they tried obtaining it from the underground market, it was possible.

Bind roots the target to the ground.

A stone golem's hand shoots out from the ground, grabbing onto the target's legs.

As the skill level rises, the duration and strength of the root increases, and it could bind a greater number of targets.

Second spell is Hold. It's a skill that lives up to its name, preventing the opponent from moving their body.

Similar to bind, the duration increases depending on the skill level and the target's level, but what if I crushed them with an incredibly high skill level?

Tying their feet with Bind, then using Hold to prevent them from moving their hands. I could put them in stasis like living dolls, leaving only the functioning of breathing intact.

Both skill was for the priest class.

Priests were in between tanks and healers, a defending and supporting class.

Since the class focused on health and agility, Hold and Bind were inefficient skills.

We exited the dungeon. The CEO was asleep in the car.

"Please bring that bastard over here."

Instead of answering, they hurriedly ran towards the car.

About two minutes had passed?

Suddenly the CEO struck one of them on the cheek.

But before he could slap the other guy...

The one who was slapped grabbed him by the thigh and slammed him to the ground.

“Oho?”

The boss was dragged in front of me by his underlings.

“You heard, right?”

“.....”

“You still don’t get what’s happening? Whatever, just hand over the charter.”

“.....”

The boss was silent for a bit, pulling out the charter from his pockets with shaking hands.

Snatching the charter from his hands, I threw it into the air and casted Piercing Sword, shredding it apart until it became dust.

Seeing my skill, his eyes grew wide.

“There should be paperwork stating that I paid off my debt, right? So that you can’t say otherwise behind my back.”

“Yes.....”

“But since I learned that honor that you guys always talk about, I could not avoid paying you the original amount of debt.”

“.....”

“Is something wrong? Your facial expression doesn’t look very good.”

“That’s not it... That’s not it at all.”

“Then let’s get that paperwork done immediately. Ah! Since I’m asking for the skill books as a special request, get them to me fast as possible, okay?”

A few moments later.

Shoulders sagging, they disappeared.

Finally, I was able to solve this headache inducing debt issue.

I gave the two goons a stern talking to make sure the CEO couldn't do anything rash.

Ah, by talking I mean physical harm of course.

While riding the taxi back home, I organized my thoughts.

You couldn't do anything without power.

But with power, I could take care of these pieces of trash so easily.

I had to get stronger.

Get stronger, and become tougher.

I had no intentions of becoming an ally of justice.

It's busy enough trying to eat and live well by myself in this world.

“Thank you very much.”

Arriving in front of the house, I left the taxi.

While basking in the rays of the morning sun, I headed home.

It was then.

[Guild Announcement]

2nd round with guild Empire.

Time: xxxx year xx month xx day

All guild members must attend.

A message from the Noblesse guild.

“Round two with Empire? This has to be a joke.”

I was sticking with this shady guild because of this one sword I obtained from them.

With the money I have, I should have enough and leftovers after purchasing a sword of this level.

Even if I purchased a lower rank sword considering the amount I had to spend to move to the safe house, for someone like me who has an incredible amount of skill points, it wasn't going to make much of a difference.

Looking at the text, I was reminded of another problem I had to solve.

To Heugdo attached at my waist, I mumbled.

“Guess this is the end between you and me.”

Chapter 29 - My Way

After three months of being an Awakened, I felt like I accomplished something.

I wondered if I ever came back home brimming with this much confidence before.

Within seconds of ringing the bell, mother opened the door hastily.

Guess she was worried for her one and only son.

“I’m back.”

“... Are you okay, son?”

With a look of worry, she checked for injuries.

You wouldn’t know how touched I was from her expression of worry.

I purposefully raised my tone of voice and answered.

“Mrs. Bak. Have you forgotten our promise at the hospital? That I will not get hurt or die.”

“Thank you. Thank you.”

“It’s all over now. That entire headache inducing interest and even the original debt is gone from this time onward. Before when you were dealing with those three goons, you were amazing. Pulling up your sleeves! Looking straight at them.”

“What are you saying. When did I do that.”

“It was the most beautiful side of you that I have seen. It all starts from here. I’ll get you all the money in the world! Let’s spend lots of money! How about we change our family motto to ‘splurging and living!’ How about it?”

With my expression and tone filled with playfulness, mother smiled brightly.

Her eyes were wet, not with sadness and despair like before, but with happiness and affection.

‘Yes. This is what I wanted most after becoming Awakened.’

A young age of 18.

The Awakened status that found me. And the incredible ability of having infinite mana.

If I put in the effort, no one could stand against me.

I dare anyone to block my path.

I’ll give you the answer to if the afterlife exists or not.

There was only one hour left before I had to attend school. After eating breakfast with mother, I quickly went to my room.

It wasn’t because I was looking forward to the skill books in the shoulder bag.

The kelvacore dropped the decent Eye of the Storm support skill last time.

Repressing my expectations, I scanned the skill book.

Personally, I was hoping for an attack skill A rank or above.

After the scan finished, the skill information popped up on the phone.

-Reflect Shield-

Usable Class: Bagi Warrior. Paladin. (If obtained by other classes, mana cost increases ten fold.) Mana Cost: 200 (For every 10 skill levels, mana cost increases by 10%.)

Skill Introduction:

- * After casting, you are protected by an invisible shield.
- * Absorbs physical attacks aimed at the caster.

* With a 10% chance, returns 50% of the damage taken. (For every 10 skill levels, reflection chance increases by 2%, and reflected damage by 1%.)

Cooldown: 30 min.

Duration: 5 min. (For every 10 skill levels, duration increases by 10%.)

Additional Explanation: Can be used simultaneously with other shields.

Skill Book Price: 3.5 million.

I thought it wasn't a bad skill.

With this, I had 3 defensive shields.

Unlike other shields, Reflect Shield had the ability to deflect damage.

A skill like this compliments a tank class.

To tanks that had a low attack capability, it was skill that allowed a chance to reflect physical attacks back to the monsters at a fixed rate.

No matter what, I was going to Awaken all shield type spells, but I was not fan of how the level of the skill affected the reflect chance as well as the amount of damage reflected.

If I was able to master it after Awakening it, the reflection chance would increase by 50%. It was a spell that only reflected physical attacks, but this made me realize there must be skills out there that protect me against magic attacks.

If it wasn't anything that raised my mana stats, whether equipment or skill, I thought it was the correct decision to obtain it.

As my skill rose, I became more disappointed of the higher ups.

Anyone who had fun leveling would know.

With quick leveling and physical growth as my basis, I thought that I could clear the level 28 dungeon in a single attempt for the first time like 'Choi So-Hyeon', the one Tae-Seong could not stop fanboying about.

As if to laugh at all the decades of effort they showed.

My interest for the skill book was brief.

I was distressed about Noblesse Park Hyun's text message.

Today at 6, round two of the guild war would began against Empire.

I planned to head to the Noblesse guild's building today.

In the building of Noblesse, 60th floor where Park Hyun's office room was located, there I was.

5 in the afternoon. Roughly 1 hour before the guild war began.

With the guidance from the intern secretary, I entered the office and dropped the Dark Sword on the conference table.

Wondering what my actions meant, with a small nod, Park Hyun sent all the secretaries out and asked me a question.

"Mr. Min-Cheol. What is it? I was about to move because the guild war was about to begin."

"I think it's time to return this sword."

Hearing my words, she could not hide her confusion any longer and spoke.

"What are you saying...? Do you not like the weapon?"

"No."

Taking a moment to relax my breathing, I continued.

"I'm quitting the guild."

“.....”

As I finished my sentence, Park Hyun's face became cold for a split second.

But she changed her expression again, and in silence, fiddled her thumbs about.

Contemplating for a while, she opened her mouth.

“Hm..... What is it? Is it the requirement to join the guild war?”

“There is no reason. I'm losing my own time.”

“If that's the reason, instead of making a hasty decision, we can solve it by talking...”

In the middle of her sentence, I cut her off.

And after bowing politely, I spoke.

“I am very thankful that you saved me. I feel a gratitude that I cannot forget for the rest of my life. However, I don't think that Noblesse is where I belong.”

“You won't even tell me the reason?”

“.....”

She looked straight at me, who remained silent, and asked.

“Is there a scouting offer from another guild? What deal are they offering?”

“No. I just dislike situations where I am underneath another, being ordered around.”

Park Hyun. She was a guild master, taking command over hundreds of Awakened.

It was an incredible display of a poker face.

She was a woman who became scarier the more you learned about her.

My prediction stated that she was going to cling onto me till the

end.

But I could not help but be surprised at her next words.

“Well... Okay, sure. Looking at your expression, I don’t think I can hold you no matter what I say. If that’s the case, it can’t be helped. Contracts are contracts. According to the contract we’ve created before, you are free to leave. Without any penalties of course.”

With her words, I could not help but be confused.

“...Yes. I am aware since I searched thoroughly in the contract.”

“If you do not need a guild, then do as you please. But you don’t know how life will turn out. If we meet again and you return, then I sincerely hope that we are together once more.”

Her cryptic words ended, and I was left with both relief and yet felt unsettled.

Was it because my weapon was gone? No.

It must be the doubt I feel towards Park Hyun.

The feeling of confusion was brief. With that, I left the Noblesse guild.

“[Must I raise my rose knife again?](#)”

So I’ve been informed by a friend that this is actually a meme. Germany once made a knife that had rose decorations on it, and accidentally made it so effective that it could cut through just about anything. Many copycats with the saying that this product is a rose knife, a knife famous for cutting through just about anything became a huge ad sensation, and a meme was born that all rose knives can cut through everything. So basically, he’s saying do I need to get serious and raise a figurative op weapon.

Chapter 30 - My Way (2)

The last night of August.

It was the last day of attending school.

The next 3 months! I could focus completely on hunting.

Starting with a month of summer break, and 2 months of hunting in between schooling was what it took to achieve growth like this.

Looking at the full moon of the night sky, it felt like it was foreshadowing that my growth would raise leaps and beyond.

After quitting the guild, different from the usual, I continued to hunt.

I informed Jong Ho about the situation.

At this moment, all my doubts about him vanished, as if all the worrying was a waste of time.

For many days, we met and shared many conversations.

Jong Ho focused mostly on the topic of ‘taking care of oneself’.

His argument was this.

Since it has only been a few days since you left the guild, if they attacked me now, the blame would naturally shift to the Noblesse guild. So for now, they were lying in wait.

It could be that we’re suspecting them without any solid evidence.

But better safe than sorry. I obtained the habit of keeping my shields up by rotating through cooldowns after leaving the guild.

‘For joining the wrong guild once, I might develop a phobia.’

In front of the relay building Jong Ho decided to meet at, I gave a call.

It was to find out about the contract involving the safe house.

I was going to reveal the surprise present to mother in 5 days.

“Hyung. Where are you?”

“I’m waiting for the left turn signal. Wait a bit.”

“Okay.”

It didn’t take long for Jong Ho to arrive, sporting a fashion that made me astonished once more.

“Wow..... Even today hyung, that’s something.”

“Since I was coming back from an important meeting, I took the extra effort.”

“Perhaps you do cosplay? You went to a meeting with these clothes? I know I say this constantly, but please stop wearing tight white shirts that stick to your body! Hyung, you look like a raisin... Ha..... Let’s just go.”

“What are you saying kid. White shirts and blue jeans are the symbol of manliness.”

‘If it’s only the white shirt, I’d leave it alone, but what are you going to do about the skull ring on your finger and the chain shackles on your jeans. Sigh.’ I tightly kept a hold of these words and resisted the urge to blurt it out.

Inside the relator building, I checked at the office if there are any listed for sale.

Thankfully there was one that was at an affordable price, near the current location we lived at.

For now, I left after informing them that I will be contacting them within a week.

“Hyung. Did you know I’ve been hunting with a rose knife for almost a week?”

“Right. You said that as you left there, you returned the sword?”

“Yes. Now I’m left with one jewel that was embedded before. Hyung, since we’re here together already, can you come along and help me select a good weapon?”

“Weapon? If that’s the case... allow me the white shirt!”

‘Are you trying to repeat the disaster once more!’ With a straight face, I turned around and waved at him.

“Be careful on the way back hyung. See you later!”

“That’s cruel! How much are you willing to spend?”

“Since I’m buying a new house, the leftover money I have is 200,000 or so. Ah! With the Manticore’s Soulstone, it should be 300,000.”

“Oho, hey. With that much, it won’t be as good as your previous sword, but you should be able to get something usable? 100 strength stat ones should be possible.”

“Is there any weapons or armor that gives me cooldown reduction?”

“Are you playing an online game? Is being an Awakened a joke to you! Argh!?”

Who can stop this energetic man.

As if he saw it from a movie, or perhaps from a trend, he yelled at me with an ugly and awkward expression.

“That expression!”

“Let’s just go for now.”

“But it’s seems really wasteful to buy a sword when I was using one for free. Feels like I’m wasting money.”

“If it seems that wasteful, you can make it all up with hunting.”

“Is there a sword that can match up to Heugdo?”

“Plenty! Swords that cannot even be compared to man stat wise, as well as the shapes that are just killer. But the prices are just too

much. They do drop from higher level dungeons though.”

“How much does the decent strength increasing weapons cost? If you say it’s 10 or 20 million, I will punch you in the gut.”

Hearing my words, Jong Ho tried to contain his smile and spoke.

“Million? ... You know that the limit of mankind for crafting is an S rank? A sword of that stat can be bought with money. But weapons and items dropped from monsters have an M in front of the rank. An abbreviation for monster. Thus a monster drop M/S weapon cannot be bought even with millions. Even I wouldn’t sell it.”

Previously, I went to the store in front of the manticore dungeon and purchased SA ranking goods.

One of them was the ‘Lich King’s Staff’. The staff that I was holding onto despite being at death’s door.

If the mana stat was replaced with strength, it was a weapon similar to Heugdo.

It was only an M/B ranking weapon, but the prices were from millions to tens of millions.

The Heugdo that I returned as I left the guild probably had the same price.

‘Damn it... Why did I listen to Jong Ho hyung. [Even if a widow bought land, it wouldn’t give me this much of a stomach.](#)’

(TL: Expression for complaint of waste of money.)

Throwing away my regrets with resolve, I asked Jong Ho.

“Where does M/B and M/A rank weapons drop?”

“Level 18 dungeons, but not from ordinary mobs. If you defeat the hidden boss, there is a small drop rate.”

‘What?’

Lv18 dungeons can be easily conquered by someone like me.

But hidden bosses similar to the 'kelvacore', and the drop rate is low?

Picking up the regret I've tossed away, I wanted to shout 'Judge..... Please return my Dark Sword. I'm without blame.'

It was almost to the point where I even had stupid thoughts like 'Park Hyun was really a good person.....'

Picking up my broken mental resolve, I asked more seriously.

"Lv 18 dungeons, the required entry level is 150, right?"

"Of course. Above level 150, and 5 to 6 people. What? Why are you so serious. Are you planning to go there now or something. Hurry up and let's go buy C or M/D ranking weapons with that 300k."

"For now, let's hold off on that. I'll go first. Hyun! Let's go have dinner with my mother sometime at a nice restaurant sometime. My treat."

"Hey. Min-Cheol. I'm saying this just in case, but don't think about going there recklessly. Do take care."

"Yes, hyung."

Level 18 dungeon.

Level 13 to 15 dungeons are immune to magic attacks. Level 16 to 18 dungeons are immune to physical attacks.

Thus, what I need to do now is...

The money that I was going to spend on weapons must be invested in skill books.

With infinite mana, I could cast spells without limit, so my skill levels would probably rise insanely?

My main offensive spells 'Gravity Laser' and the 'Fire Shock' I ordered from the midget a couple days ago, I planned to Awaken both skills and destroy the level 18 dungeon.

That was the gist of it.

It was fortunate that I did not use the Awakened Essence on Piercing Sword.

A skill that I had #1 priority to Awaken, but to go to the level 18 dungeon where physical attacks do not work, Gravity Laser rose past the ranks of importance.

Maybe I'll be lucky and get the M/B weapon Jong Ho was talking about.

The rose knife that I thought I would be holding on for the last time, I tightened my grip around it.

'At least for a week.... I don't think you'll be cutting carrots. Sorry.'

The goal is the level 18 dungeon. And to Awaken two magic skills!

"It won't take long. Let's go!"

From the small fry, I obtained Bind and Fire Shock spell books.

The three couldn't look at me in the eyes till the end, and I couldn't help but laugh.

In the future, if I had more uses for using the underground channels, I'm sure I'll see them again.

[Will you obtain the Fire Shock skill?]

The sound of narration always excited me.

Without hesitation, I used all the skill books in my hand.

"Hm.... Bind and Hold, I'll raise later. For now, it's Fire Shock!"

Fire Shock send out massive amounts of flames around me.

It wasn't a skill that continuously used up mana. Thus, it had a cooldown.

A whole 3 minutes.

It could be considered exaggerating to call 3 minutes that.

However, the skill's duration was only 10 seconds. Waiting 3 min for 10 seconds, it was a skill far less efficient than Eye of the Storm.

And even if the skill level rises, the duration did not. Only the damage did.

Of course, you really can't compare a main offensive skill and a support skill.

Range was 15 meters from the caster. Both range and duration was pathetic for the price.

So why did I purchase such a trash-like skill, paying with all that money?

The answer to that is the massive increase of damage as it gets closer to lv 100.

There is almost nobody who would spend the time and effort to raise a skill like this.

After casting, Fire Shock spewed out enough flames to melt all opponents nearby within 10 seconds.

There was no shape to the flames.

As if from 'Love and Soul', the dead's soul piercing through a person.

The flames would flow deep into the target's bodies, causing severe lethal harm internally.

Unfortunately, it didn't reach a satisfying amount of damage until it reaches near lv 100, so most didn't attempt to raise it. And the skill book didn't drop easily either. It was a [ghost like skill](#).

(TL: Pipe dream. Raise the unraisable, do the impossible, row row fight the power!)

I was planning to Awaken this ghost like skill as well!

“Seems I’ll need a lot of Awakened Essences..... Guess I’ll be seeing the midget and two goons often?”

Chapter 31 - My Way (3)

I had decided on my current goal.

I needed an M/B or M/A ranking weapon.

The reason I needed a weapon was for the dungeons that were resistant to magic.

For mana stat, no matter how much you raised it, it wouldn't affect the magic's damage.

Only the total mana and the recovery rate.

Even the Awakened's level did not affect the skill's damage.

No matter how high leveled you were.

If you had the same skill and skill level, you'd do the same damage.

If there is a difference between a low level Awakened and higher leveled Awakened...

Increasing the mana stat to improve your overall mana pool and mana regen, allowing you to continuously cast the strongest skills.

Thus, the important thing to a magician class is the 'skill level'.

That's why they would be entering the level 18 dungeon.

If you think about it, it's a hunt for weapons, but I'm skipping from the level 13 dungeon to the level 18 dungeon all at once.

For the average Awakened, the level 13 dungeon's requirements was a 5 to 6 man party of level 65 minimum.

However, for the level 18 dungeon, you'd have to be a party of 5 to 6 members, all 85 levels higher than before, a group of lv 150s.

It took a minimum of 4 to 5 years of effort to make it possible.

And if you take account of the experience points and equipment befitting these members, there was a huge gap between me and

them.

The amount of experience points you could earn would be on a different level.

The experience you could earn from the manticore dungeon would be 12 million or so.

By clearing the succubi dungeon once, you could receive up to 80 million experience. Just by the dungeon level increasing by 1, there was this much of a difference.

Of course, it's biased since I was able to defeat the revival succubi as well in the level 13 dungeon.

My current level is 95.

I was able to achieve what would've taken others 3 years in only 3 months.

Roughly speaking, I had 12 times the growth speed of others.

A regular Awakened's year would be only a month to me. But this isn't the end.

Because the gap will only increase from here on out.

The skill and level growth rate only being 12 times higher?

No. I was sure that at the minimum, it would be 50 times.

It was like hitting the cheat key in BattleNet and casting 'Psionic Storm' that a 'High Templar' uses?

I didn't think of stupid thoughts like 'I'll go to the level 18 dungeon when my level meets the requirements.'

Raising my main attack skill and shield to level 100! That was my requirement for entering the level 18 dungeon.

It was the time of year that nights became longer than day, and cold winds from morning till evening blew.

Time had passed to the point where I had to flip the calendar past

October.

The safe house Jong Ho and I looked for before, we were able to match the timing of moving in with her birthday.

After the move, I went around to my neighbors to [giving welcoming rice cakes around](#), and most reacted like this.

Common welcoming gifts shared around new neighbors, at least traditionally speaking. I think the tradition has nearly died out except in richer/older communities.

‘There are people who still do this?’ or ‘They are coming in because they won the lottery,’ was the general response.

I was a little disappointed.

But I really liked the home that was going to give peace and reassurance to my mother and my heart.

Since I was earning a lot more than what I thought, it was time for me to whip myself back into shape from a period of relaxation.

Happiness I obtained through difficulties.

I cannot have it stolen.

I cannot have it crushed.

I only hope that it’ll stay this way.

Finally today. I was able to reach level 100 in all skills with the exception of ‘Frost Orb’, ‘Heal’, ‘Hold’, and ‘Bind’.

For ‘Eye of the Storm’, since the increase in level didn’t do much, I leveled it up on to 70 and stopped it there.

I only hunted to level my skills, but ended up naturally leveling to 108.

If Jong Ho heard about this, he would probably fall over backwards and faint.

The only reason I was able to achieve such a satisfying result was diligence.

I could get rid of fatigue and physical wounds with Heal.

However, there was the hindrance known as ‘sleep’.

This was something that Heal couldn’t cure.

But I found even time used for sleep a waste. I wanted to grow even quicker.

I even searched for magic that would get rid of sleep.

The time I allowed myself was 6 hours.

This period of time did not only include sleep, but also for eating and taking care of myself.

Other than that, I only focused on hunting. 18 hours a day succubi hunting.

It was a brutal training. However on Sundays, I would take a break no matter what happened.

I was growing stronger for happiness, so I wouldn’t skip time with my mother.

Returning from the hunting grounds, I opened a safe in the corner of my room to retrieve the Awakened Essence.

And without hesitation, Awakened Gravity Laser.

I held the skill book against my chest and thought about Awakening the Gravity Laser.

Then.

[Would you like to Awaken Gravity Laser?]

Look at this kind narration provided by this noona.

I know this would be impossible, but I wanted to meet her someday and take her out for dinner.

“This is great.”

After Awakening the spell, the status window that showed Gravity Laser had a star in front of it, and the skill's level became 1.

The required experience to level was 98 million.

Before Awakening, the experience required to level up the skill from level 1 was 100. It felt like the difference was too steep.

Finishing the Awakening, all preparations to enter the level 18 dungeon was perfect.

I arrived in front of the dungeon entrance, located in [Nowon](#).

Nowon-gu, Seoul, South Korea.

[Guri](#), where I was currently living at, was 30 min away from the entrance.

Guri-si, Gyeonggi-do.

Since I could not find any level 18 dungeons nearby, I was forced to waste 1 hour a day traversing.

Preparation was complete, and I could see the dungeon entrance before my eyes.

“Is there a need to hesitate?”

Dungeon is being activated.

The interior of the dungeon was something completely different from what I've seen so far.

A narrow rural road of 5m wide.

Each side of the road was accompanied by darkness that seemed to swallow light itself, which I found to be cliffs.

If felt as though if I fell, I would go straight down to hell.

Not only were the cliffs, but the ceiling and everywhere else was covered in complete darkness.

The only thing that had color in my sights was the rural road.

‘If there was a road the grim reaper would guide people through, would it be like this?’ was what I was considering.

Sightseeing ends here.

Without hesitation, I started to run.

I wonder how much time has passed.

When the entrance seemed smaller than a fingernail.

I heard the cries of the monsters ahead.

When I looked at where the sound came from, the first one I noticed was the ‘Poison Naga.’

The owner of the sharp piercing cry was the ‘Griffon.’

And next to it, there was a ghastly faded form.

It was exactly as I learned.

Until now, all dungeons had a single type of monster.

However, from level 16 and beyond had 2 to 5 different types of monsters mixed in.

For the level 18 dungeon that I’ve entered, it featured 3 different types of monsters.

If the variety of monsters increase, the different defense and attack become difficult to deal with.

Melee and ranged monsters, as well as monsters that use special abilities.

The reason why 5 to 6 members enter together as a party was to execute the correct strategies that work against the different monsters.

Even if physical attacks didn’t work, this was why tanks such as Paladins and Dragonite Warriors are needed.

Amongst the warrior class, the tank was treated like royalty.

Without being carried, it could keep growing.

But is that really important.

‘Even today, I’ll do it by myself!’

As the Griffons Fear rang out, I casted the ‘Awakened Gravity Laser’ to max range and ran full speed.

It was an attack skill that attacked anything within 100m without discrimination, regardless of what monsters and life forms they were.

The attack had begun the moment I could tell their shapes clearly.

All lasers within range were firing out in all directions.

I could not help but be surprised as I closed the distance between me and them.

“Huh? What the?”

Awakened Gravity Laser had a different thickness and color.

The thickness and clearness could not be compared to the previous version before Awakening.

Even when it got near level 100, it never showed crushing force like this.

It was as 3 times as thick, a mixture of red and blue powerful laser that poured out.

Through Awakening, the skill’s increase in power had increased to eye opening levels.

“Guess this is the reason why everyone focuses so much on money. Let’s kill!”

Chapter 32 - My Way (4)

The laser indiscriminately pierced through the monsters, ripping them to shreds.

However, the wounds, as they received damage, seemed to heal at the same time.

It wasn't perfect, but bleeding stopped quickly, and something seemed to fill the empty holes in their bodies.

"It would be great if I had a skill to prevent their regeneration."

Most high ranking magic had some kind of ability that prevented enemy from recovering.

It had incredibly high damage output, as well as preventing recovery. It wasn't just called a high ranking skill for nothing.

They also sported an incredible price matching that.

Putting aside my disappointment, I looked at them.

'Griffon.'

With the head and wings of an eagle, and sharp talons.

It was a giant monster with the body and hind legs of a lion.

The moment it came within my sights, it flew towards me with incredible speeds.

From its beak to wings, it came at me like an arrow.

From what I found out, until its life was extinguished, it would attack like this.

However, when its fire of life was about to be extinguished, it would attack as if its life is on the line.

The last final attack.

Its body glanced the shield casted around me.

Due to the incredible amount of speed and power, the Reflect

Shield seemed to waver a bit.

It was a shield that had reached lv 100. It seemed that I didn't give enough credit for its attack power.

Until it turned its direction to head back towards me, the shield recovered its form and I finished preparing to receive its attack.

With its multiple attacks, the Reflect Shield was countering by reflecting the attack back at it.

Then.

While I was focused solely on its attacks, the 'Poison Naga' continued to spray sticky vomit around me.

The vomit it spewed all over the floor started to boil like hydrochloric acid on metal.

Soon, a foul smoke began to permeate.

If I make a mistake and step on it without my shield, it wouldn't end with just losing my boots and armor.

The vile poison would instantly seep into the foot of the Awakened.

If that happens, there is only one solution. Without a single bit of hesitation, to amputate from the calf down.

If you try to pathetically save one's foot with an 'Antidote' spell, you'd lose your life within a minute.

The one thing that made me shudder was for the high stamina tank type Awakened.

Due to the defense capabilities from their stamina stat, no magicians that would normally enter a level 18 dungeon would be able to amputate. Thus only the poisoned member themselves could, and would have to cut off their own limb.

Even if you were an Awakened with 100 stamina and 10 strength, you were able to hurt yourself as if your body was that of a normal

person.

As if a scene from the movie “Saw.”

Of course high ranking healers could regenerate the lost foot.

You’d have to pay an incredible sum of money though.

A monster with the body and tail of a snake, a halfling.

From the waist up, the hands each held a sword thin as paper.

After spitting out venom repeatedly, it flicked its tongue, getting closer.

It could slide quickly on the areas the venom it spat out landed.

“A chicken and a bowl of snake soup. I’m blessed with food.”

Time for the griffon to attack again.

I casted Fire Shock.

In a radius of 15m around me, the dark dungeon was bathed in bright red.

It was a skill with only a duration of 10 seconds, so I had to hold them in place as long as possible.

The moment they were in my sights, I used Bind to root them.

The level 21 bind would only last for 1 to 2 seconds, but I just need to keep casting is all.

The moment when the griffon was caught by its hind legs and flapped its wings desperately to struggle free...

I casted Hold on the naga that was swinging its sword at me.

It was obvious that its sword attacks would be all blocked by my shield.

However, I knew that the constant attacks would slowly eat away at the duration of the shields.

The flames from the Fire Shock meeting with the venom caused the dungeon to become a gas chamber.

If my shields gave out right now, and I was to inhale this smoke.....

Since I did not raise my agility stat, I was weak towards status changes. It was obvious that a tragedy would occur.

A skill that did not take account for the surroundings, truly for those who play solo.

It's a hunting method that a hunting party cannot even dream about.

Without being able to move, they could only get hit by the Fire Shock head on.

10 seconds.

It was the time left before I casted Gravity Laser again since casting Hold and Bind with both my hands prevented me from casting it.

Until then I had to focus only on halting their movements.

I noticed that their ability to recover had been reduced drastically.

As the sea of red ended, stopping the cast of Hold and Bind, I continued to spam Gravity Laser.

After Bind being undone, the griffon that was flying at me continuously suddenly stopped 3m above my head.

His life force must be nearly extinguished. The only thing left must be his last resort attack.

Despite the laser penetrating and ripping its entire body apart, it spread its wings and continued to flap its way towards me.

But that was for a brief moment.

As it stopped its wings, the feathers from the inside of its wings began to pour down.

The small black red shards were like sharp assassin weapons,

resembling that of an assassin's 'Weapon Throw'.

The shape was different, but it wasn't just an attack. It was truly a final attack.

Feather that came pouring like rain. Just in case, I had even casted Spirit Armor.

Due to the attack above me, my vision was nearly blocked due to all the feathers being imbedded in the shield.

As if from the battles with [Guseon](#) where all those arrows and explosives were embedded on it.

Korean battle ship, resembling a turtle. Cannons on all sides, metal hull and a roof that had spikes. Its purpose is to charge through enemy's line, therefore it's almost always covered in arrows and explosives.

Even on the naga who was nearly dead, there were hundreds, if not thousands of featheres embedded on it.

The destroyed body that struggled till its last fell to the ground.

[100,000 Experience Obtained]

[100,000 Experience Obtained]

For killing one, the experience I gained was 100k!

Level 18 dungeons were different from the manticore and succubus dungeons.

Unlike those dungeons where hundreds of monsters appeared, there were only 20 to 25 monsters.

But even those few, if I could get them all I could obtain a minimum experience of 2 million.

Unlike the 800k experience I received form the succubus dungeon, the experience I gained rose over 2.5 times from before.

In order for a level 108 to increase his or her lv by 1, the experience required was 60 million.

After lv 30, the required experience began to exponentially increase, and now has become 60 million.

To take down both these two, it had taken only 2 minutes.

But thinking about the 3 minutes cooldown time of Fire Shock...

I realized that it would take roughly 1 hour to take them all down.

“This isn’t going to work out.”

Thought for a brief moment...

The collapsed bodies gave off a green ‘demonic fire’ along with the blood stone.

The light was absorbed by a monster far away who was merely watching the fight.

“I forgot about him. Ah. I have a headache. One hour probably isn’t enough?”

The one who absorbed the light, its form became a little less ethereal than before.

Its name is ‘Reaper Louver ‘.

From the dungeon entrance onwards, this place looked like a road to guide the dead to the underworld.

To match that, a reaper that guides all the monsters’ soul in the dungeon had appeared.

“Passing the summer, they’re filming ‘Legend of the Homeland’.”

As our eyes met, it turned its back on me and disappeared into the darkness.

It wouldn’t attack right now.

Maybe when all the monsters here have died. If the hidden boss appeared, it would probably absorb its soul and then fight.

The boss itself was a mid-tier boss, but if it absorbed the soul of the hidden boss, I heard it would become incredibly strong.

I didn't have time for this.

I gave my all and charged forward.

Continued to take down the enemies.

Hunting by grouping only 2~3 of them at a time. And they kept recovering.

And the 3 minutes cooldown of Fire Shock.

The result was going overtime on the dungeon's time limit.

All the monsters that fired magic gleefully disappeared, and the exit opened in the center of the dungeon.

“Damn it.”

And that's how I tasted my first defeat as an Awakened.

Chapter 33 - My Way (5)

After leaving the dungeon, I grabbed a taxi.

By doing this, I was able to level up, but I was not able to obtain the weapon I wanted.

And the B rank stones, even though I was investing time, I was not able to take them back since I couldn't clear the dungeon.

It cannot go on like this.

“Thank you. Take care.”

The place I arrived at was the Awakened market near the level 18 hunting grounds.

After leaving the taxi, I went to the biggest market there.

It was because I was buying a high class item.

In the store, there were many customers present.

While I was wandering aimlessly, a 20 year old female store employee came towards me.

The average male would not want any employee to come and help them.

I felt like there was no point in coming to the large market.

The employee was someone who spoke business like.

“Welcome.”

“Yes. Hello.”

“Is there something you are looking for?”

“Trying to purchase a Necromancer skill book.”

Yes. High ranking magic attacks have anti healing properties, like a rice cake painting.

It was something that I couldn't even dream about with the money I had.

That's why I was planning to buy the cheaper alternative, a debuff skill.

It had the same effect, but no one but the Necromancer could use it, since there would be a 10 times the mana cost penalty.

"Necromancer skill book. Please come this way?"

Following the guidance of the employee, we headed towards the corner of the store.

Unlike the small markets near home, there were many guards looking over the place.

Each armed to the teeth, that is.

The inside of the market was divided like a bookstore, and none of the actual items were on display, as only pictures of them were hung up.

Even the half A rank weapon I used was hung up as picture in a corner.

"This is where the necro skill books are, but what are you looking for specifically?"

"'Lower Resist' and 'Un-Recoverable' please."

"Understood. Lower Resist is over here, and you said Un-Recoverable?"

She turned towards me to confirm.

"Yes."

"But why are you saying it in such a difficult terminology. You can just call it anti healing skill. That's what everyone calls it. It's not like there is another 'anti healing' magic found in any other schools of magic."

"Ah..... I just memorized it the way the encyclopedia had it written..."

"Guess it hasn't been long since you became an Awakened."

“Yes.”

The employee smirked and spoke.

After picking up the two skill books, she continued.

“Did you need anything else?”

“Healer class attack power buff skill book as well.”

“Yes. Understood.”

As soon as I finished talking, two guards by the wall headed towards me and the employee.

‘Oh? What the.’

Without thinking, strength went into both my arms.

Looking at my eyes that went wide, she plastered on a fake smile and spoke.

“Out of all the items at our store, the skill books are considered one of the most prized possessions. That’s why there are guards that come along when we bring them out. Sorry if it surprised you.”

“Ah... Yes.....”

I guess it made sense since the Necromancer debuff skill book alone was \$60,000, and then to buy the attack buff skill as well.

It didn’t take long for me and the employee to arrive at the counter.

With the two guards at each side, just like the time with the midgets and the goons.

‘This type of situation.... I dislike it for some reason.’ was my thought process.

Finishing the transaction, I boarded the taxi.

Learning all three skill books, the taxi was slowly heading back.

It was annoying to have to raise the level of the skills each time I

obtain one.

However, only by raising the levels of the skills do their true values show, so there was no other way.

I had to hit the most amount of monsters possible to level them up quickly.

Back to the manticore dungeon. It was like a training room to me now.

After investing three hours to raise the skill levels up somewhat...

I was in front of the level 18 dungeon once more.

Half the time for hunting was wasted.

It was because I had wasted half the time set aside for hunting on a dungeon that didn't return much.

But it was for the perfect clear on the level 18 dungeon today.

The dungeon was pitch black.

I was sure, but just in case, I pulled two mobs first.

Then I casted Lower Resist and Anti Healing on them.

On their chests, an inversed triangle and x shape formed one after another.

With this, debuffs are complete.

Quickly casting the attack buff on myself, I casted Gravity Laser.

With incredible thickness, it penetrated their bodies.

Riddled with gaping holes, red blood sprayed everywhere.

It didn't heal. The debuffs were showing definitive effect.

After confirming the effects of the debuff, I casted my shields and ran towards them.

And just like the griffon's final attack, I aimed to use my Fire

Shock to finish them in one go.

Below me was a sea of flames.

The griffon's sharp feathers became imbedded in the shield, but they were merely ashes slowly cooling.

"Good."

Other than the poison spit attack from the naga, nothing could approach me without dying.

The only thing I'd have to worry about when pulling a vast amount of mobs is the griffon's attack.

Pulling all the monsters in the dungeon, I casted Frozen Shield and Spirit Armor.

Frozen Shield shatters after taking a strong attack.

Previously, it shattered from the kelvacore's brace attack in one go.

That's why I casted Spirit Armor over the Frozen Shield for additional safety.

Then the debuffs, followed by Fire Shocks to those that cannot recover.

Meanwhile casting Gravity Laser to torment them in between.

Out of all my defensive skills, Reflect Shield provided the most reliable protection.

That's why I left it in case the hidden boss appeared, as well as for Louver.

If there was no cooldown, there would be no need for this.

With my perfect plan, I was able to annihilate them cleanly.

Other than the time it took to take down the two, it only took 10 min.

All the fallen's soul was absorbed by Louver.

It was about time that it showed its face.

However, it went back to hiding in the center of the dungeon.

-SQUEEEAL!

I heard the sound of a pig.

The boss had appeared.

To think that a hidden boss would appear on my first clear of the level 18 dungeon.

There was no way to hide the excitement on my face.

If I was lucky, I'd be able to obtain the weapon I want in a single day.

With that in mind, I ran towards the center of the dungeon.

“Wow.... Chicken, snake soup, and now pork?”

The pig was about 5m in size.

It was a bipedal pig, carrying a mace the size of its head.

With its other hand, it held onto a circular wooden box.

Its attack power was low, but the item in its left hand was dangerous.

You could think of it as a bomb that caused a massive explosion.

If I was able to avoid that one attack, I could probably beat it up without any problems.

“However, that guy hiding over there bothers me. Just you wait.”

Only for a moment did the stare down with Louver went.

‘Gwidon’ started to charge at an incredible speed with its head nearly touching the floor.

When it came close to me, I casted the debuff and self buff at the same time.

The noise it made as its body crashed with the ground. The ground shook and I could feel the pressure from it.

The mace was raised above its head and came crashing down towards me.

But thanks to its large body, there was no way such a slow attack would hit me.

It swung through thin air and embedded the mace into the ground, it immediately tried to raise it again.

I ran behind it, and got on its back.

Holding onto its hide, I began to cast all my skills with reckless abandon.

From experience, at close range the Lightning Spray is a lot more effective than the Gravity Laser.

Through hunting, I knew it would do massive amounts of damage to its internals.

Even if Gravity Laser was an A rank skill while Lightning Spray is a C rank, depending on the situation, it could be super effective.

The flames from Fire Shock flew about, its back becoming charred black.

From its nose, mouth, and ears, black smoke came out.

It was obvious that it had suffered terrible internal injuries.

Even while casting the spells, my mind was focused on its left hand.

The mace was in its right hand. With its short hand, it could not hit me while I was on it.

It seemed that it has decided on something, as it raised its left hand up and tossed the bomb in the air.

‘Reflect Shield.’

Instead of just going down like this, it seemed to have wanted to

get me off even if it meant taking damage as well.

-BOOM!

The wooden container that left its hand exploded with a deafening noise.

At the same time, it knelt down and lost the life in its eyes.

It didn't die just because of the damage from the explosion.

The boss wasn't stupid enough to suicide.

It was because of the damage reflected by the shield.

Since the Reflect Shield had reached level 100, the reflect chance was 30%, while the damage returned was 60%.

It had reflected more than half of the immense amount of explosive damage.

Even if the shield didn't reflect, it was going to die anyways.

But this makes it a lot easier.

While I was trying to loot the drops floating above 'Gwidon'....

Reaper Louver became a solid form and started to move.

This was the second time I entered this dungeon, but I was already beginning to grow tired of it.

It has not even been 20 minutes yet, but being stared at by those eyes that keeps following me...

Didn't feel like 20 minutes, but over 2 hours.

Using the attack skills of the monsters it absorbed.

And it even absorbed the soul of Gwidon.

It wasn't an easy fight.

That's what I thought as I looked at its ethereal corpse embedded into the ground.

Investing \$100,000, I had only learned 3 new skills.

But thanks to those skills, I was able to clear it for less than half the time it would've taken me.

A dungeon that required the skills of 5 to 6 different classes.

But I found a way to solo it.

I went next to Gwidon's corpse.

Looking it over, I could not see any weapons.

However, like a hidden boss, it dropped a huge B ranking bloodstone and a skill book.

It should have a huge price differential compared to the C rank stone.

Taking all the loot, I went to the corpse of Louver.

It did not drop any stones, skills books, or even weapons.

But I saw a shiny bracelet floating above its corpse.

“Ara ara.”

With the skill book, bracelet, and a fortune, I immediately exited the dungeon.

Chapter 34 - Exp Continues To Rise

Look at this nonsensical growth.

It takes 20 minutes to clear the dungeon.

But the experience I gained from it was 2 to 2.5 million.

With only 10 days of hunting, my level had risen from 108 to 124.

I was able to raise 1 to 2 levels each day.

If you think about it, it was only natural.

I did not have to wait to recharge my mana, and was taking the experience that would normally be shared across 5 to 6 people.

Rather than the boss, the hidden boss had a higher chance of dropping the Awakened Essence.

Thanks to the appearance of 'Gwidon', I was able to obtain another Awakened Essence.

As soon as I got the essence, I Awakened Fire Shock.

At least until level 150 to 170, I was planning to continue hunting here.

After that, I was planning to Awaken a physical attack skill.

Other items dropped other than the Awakened Essence, but they were all useless compared to the items dropped on the first clear.

Three footwear dropped, but all of them raised mana.

Why are only mana items dropping...

Thankfully though, I was able to obtain a skill book I was going to buy, 'Flash'.

Soon as I exited the dungeon, I learned it.

It was a skill that would let me teleport 5m.

However the real prize was this.

The bracelet that Louver dropped!

It was on a dimension of its own, nothing like the regular equipment.

It was a 'named equipment', one that would only drop from Louver.

Not just the bracelet, but a ring and a necklace exists, each with their own abilities.

If you equip all three, you even get a set bonus effect.

'Louver's Bracelet' had a simple ability.

It didn't raise your stats, or your defense.

[After absorbing a certain amount of magical energy and using a skill with the hand that has the bracelet equipped, the skill casted will be more than twice as powerful.]

It was a simple description, but an incredible item.

The bracelet's effect also showed an incredible destructive force.

After casting a certain amount of skills and killing monsters, the silver bracelet starts to glow blue.

Then.

The next skill used would be vastly strengthened.

Currently this item was not found on the auction house.

Even the history of this item showed that it was rarely auctioned.

'Those who will succeed can do whatever they want.'

Recently, I've been thinking that this saying fits me perfectly.

Honestly, when the bracelet dropped...

I was hoping for equipment that raised strength or stamina stats.

I was just hoping for something that didn't raise the mana stat.

But instead of indulging in my small wish, it gave me this wonderful boon instead.

‘Gold axe or silver axe. My choice is the steel axe.’

It was like the story of the lumberjack who lost his axe in the lake.

Previously, the 5% drop rate on the blood stone had increased to a reasonable level.

Perhaps it was due to the low number of monsters?

The amount of stone earned was similar with places where lots of monsters appeared.

Of course there was the huge difference in price of B rank stones dropping instead of C.

I think I got the hang of leveling up my skills to 100.

If only Awakened Essences dropped more, but that’s just wishful thinking.

I was planning to save money to purchase ‘Glacial Field’.

Currently one of the most powerful magic out there.

I needed Magma Pool and Meteor Call as well, but I picked a frost type spell because the first spell I obtained was the Frost Orb spell.

In the taxi after finishing the day’s hunt and heading back home...

The 30 minute travel time was also a time for me to plan ahead and sort out my thoughts.

Sometimes, this is where I’d have a call with mother or Jong Ho as well.

There were times when calls would come from Sang-min, but after leaving the guild, there was a unexplainable distance formed between us, and I was no longer glad to talk to him anymore.

-Riiiiiiiing.

‘If you talk about a tiger, it will come.’ Jong Ho’s calling.

I was grateful to this hyung for many reasons.

Other than the internet, it was my only route for obtaining information. Not only that, but there was much to learn from him, excluding the fashion sense.

During the meal we had to celebrate the purchase of the house, mother seemed to be very fond of him as well.

“Yes. The world’s best Kim Min-Cheol speaking.”

“It’s commander Lee Jong Ho.”

“Hail! What is it?”

“Uh. You’re working hard. It’s nothing much, just this. I was hoping to meet with you this weekend.”

“No worries, commander. Would you like to have dinner with my mother as well?”

“Oho. That’s good. Then let’s meet after taking care of business.”

I can’t believe that we match this well.

Perhaps I should ask mother seriously if there was a long lost hyung?

“But what is it? It’s the first time hyung has asked me to meet first?”

“Nothing important, just wanted you to come somewhere with me.”

“Okay. Understood. See you tomorrow, hyung.”

“Oh yes. I’m grateful.”

“Min-Cheol. I’m in front of the house. But due to the guards preventing me from even entering the residential area, I just parked the car at the entrance.”

“Yes. I just got on the elevator. I’ll be there soon.”

“Oka-”

I could see Jong Ho waiting at the entrance.

I’ve known him for over two months now, but this was the first time he asked to meet me first.

Without even telling me the details to boot.

I saw Jong Ho purchasing something at a corner.

“What’s up? You called me up to meet first.”

“It’s nothing much. Kind of embarrassing to say.”

“What is it? Making me curious.”

“Hyung is going to go purchase armor with the money he’s saved up, but a bit nervous since I’ll be meeting up in person to do a trade directly.”

“What... I’m a body guard?”

“Sorry. I couldn’t ask anyone else because that’d be embarrassing. Let’s buy this first and let’s go.”

“What? Beansprouts?”

“Yes. Sweet potatoes and spinach too.”

“Eh?”

I noticed Jong Ho receiving a black envelop.

Paying for my share, and obtaining the change from the grandma...

I noticed Jong Ho sliding a few C rank stones into the herb basket.

Looking at Jong Ho, I asked by mouthing the words silently.

‘What. Is. It?’

To my question, he put his index finger on his lips in a shushing

gesture and nodded his head.

‘Is he paying me because he is guilty? I feel like a bad person now.’

After finishing the purchase, Jong Ho scratched his head while laughing.

“You’ll come with, right?”

He’s been helping me so much until now, but for something simple as this, he was feeling guilty and sorry for me, and I found it cute.

Despite him being a hyung and all.

Today’s the day we take a break, once a week. There’s the dinner with Jong Ho and mother, and when else would I be able to help this hyung out, I felt proud.

However, if it went like this, it won’t be fun.

“Ah. What are you doing, hyung. Calling someone busy like me for something like this.”

“Uh... uh? Ah. I’m sorry. I thought it’d be okay since I heard you are resting today.”

“Ah... Jeez.”

Yes. I have to tease him like this for fun. Right when his red embarrassed face was about to explode...

“Pfft. Teasing you is the best.”

“What? You... Are you going or not?”

“Of course I’ll go. Why are you asking something like that. And because it’s cold today, you even wore a windbreaker?”

“Yeah. I thought you’d be embarrassed, so I wore it one purpose. Why?”

“Then we must go for sure. Let’s go.”

A small park near the market.

This is the area Jong Ho planned to have the trade.

After calling the seller, Jong Ho spoke.

“3 min and they’ll be here.”

“We’ll only have to wait a bit. But what armor did you buy?”

“Yes. B rank armor, but it’s used so it is cheap. It was being re-evaluated as a half A rank.”

“Aha. How much?”

“Cost?”

Hearing my question, he smiled while raising four fingers.

“4 million? Is it usually that expensive? From what I hear, it’s about 1 million. There’s no helmet included, right?”

“No. No.”

“Hyung, you don’t like me, right?”

“\$400,000! Super cheap, right? ‘Opportunities come to someone who lives righteously.’ But it has to be all cash.”

“Wow. No matter it being a used item, it’s that cheap? That’s really good. But let me go use the bathroom real quick.”

Needed to go quick, but I did not see a single open stall.

I had to go to the cafe and buy a drink to be able to use the bathroom.

Returning to the park. I saw Jong Ho and the vendor from afar.

‘Hm? Why does he look familiar?’ was what I thought.

As I got closer, I heard the conversation.

“Since we need to check the armor’s ability, should we go into a dungeon?”

“Yes. But my sibling has gone to the bathroom. Let’s wait a bit.”

“Eh. It’ll be over real quick. Let’s go already.”

Who’s this. The one who tried to scam me out, trying to buy the ‘Magician’s Insight Bracelet’ from me.

Guess he didn’t change his ways.

“Oh boy. You’re still alive?”

“Hwuhh!”

“You really give your all to living.”

Remembering the past, he started to tremble like a leaf when he saw me.

Even stuttering his words too.

“You suffered that much last time. Why did you not learn.”

“... Th-that’s... because.....”

“You’ll confirm it at the dungeon? Let’s go then.”

I flicked the armor he was holding on with my finger, and he just collapsed on the ground.

“You know him?”

“Hyung. I think you saved \$400,000 today?”

“What do you mean?”

“This guy is a scammer. Remember how I told you about the time I beat the shit out of the person who tried to buy the Magician’s Insight Bracelet?”

“Yeah, you did.”

Instead of answering, I pointed at him.

Realizing the situation now, Jong Ho gave a hollow laugh.

However, Jong Ho was still handing over the envelope with the money inside to him.

‘Kind to the point of bothersome. So frustrating.’

“What are you doing hyung? You can just take it you know?”

“.....”

After handing the money, Jong Ho turned around and headed towards the car in silence.

I was able to learn that there was a side to him other than the joking one, a side that was very different from me.

It's not just pocket change, but \$400,000.

For a level 60 like Jong Ho, it would take months, if not a year to get that much money saved up without a doubt.

But here he is, walking on his own path with the armor in silence.

He was someone I could never understand.

“Let's go together, hyung!”

We headed towards Jong Ho's car.

He sat at the driver's seat with a neutral expression.

I quietly got onboard the car.

“Yeah! Min-Cheol. Doesn't this armor look killer?”

“Hyung.....?”

“It's not a joke. I smell the sweat of a hard, honest veteran's work.”

I didn't say anything more about the scammer.

Just kept joking around with him like usual while we moved.

“Then we should probably check out the armor's ability, no?”

“Yeah?”

“Let's go!”

Chapter 35 - Exp Continues To Rise (2)

“Kya... Min-Cheol.”

“Again. Why?”

“Touch it over here. Doesn’t it feel a lot harder than before?”

“Why are doing this. Ew! Won’t you go away? Shoo! Shoo!”

“Ha.... You’re something else. Hyung’s mood is something else right now. Wow... My eyes have opened to a new world.”

If people only heard what was happening, they would definitely misunderstand this conversation.

The trade business ended earlier than expected.

There was still 9 hours left before the dinner with mother.

Recently, she has become friendly with the residents of the safe house and for the first time ever, decided to go watch a musical.

Mother was finally hanging out with people her age, and was enjoying life to the fullest now.

“It’s been a week since we went on a date together. I’m so sorry. But let’s have a nice dinner at least.”

That’s what she told me as she put on makeup.

Musical.

If you think about it, it’s not a big deal.

Looking so excited like a young lady, I couldn’t help but think that it was cute.

With this situation in mind, the two solo Awakened ended up at the level 18 dungeon after finishing the business exchange.

Without anywhere to go, where else would we end up at.

And now, with two level ups, Jong Ho was really hyped.

It was because he experienced hunting on another level unlike

anything he did, speed hunting.

Putting 10 points into strength, he showed off his biceps and told me to touch them.

Looking at the childlike happiness Jong Ho had, my heart felt at ease thinking that I had paid off even a little bit of the debt I owed to him.

Before entering, he was rejecting the offer.

Honestly, he was probably half afraid and half sorry for me.

It was only a month ago when I was beating down the succubi, and now going to a level 18 dungeon.

Just the two of us to boot.

I think it took at least 20 minutes to convince him.

‘Sigh. And too nice as well?’

His type was the type that refuses to cause trouble for others, so he kept making excuses.

At one point, Jong Ho declined it like this.

Guess trying to clear the dungeon sounded very dangerous.

To reassure him, I said that I will clear the dungeon in 20 minutes by myself and pulled out my identification license.

It was to show that I could clear the level 18 dungeon, so I can calm him down.

I was about to have the identification license scanned.

Then.

“Hey. Min-Cheol, don’t do it! It’s too much! Too much!”

“Why are you doing this! I clear this dungeon like I live here.”

“No way! No way! Are you struggling with something? Let’s talk this out with hyung. You have to think about your mother at home!”

“Ha.....”

‘You sweet potato like person.....’

It was like eating three cold sweet potatoes in a row without any kimchi.

Jong Ho saw that I was trying to go in and was stopping me with everything he had.

There were no words for what was happening, and I felt that Jong Ho cared for me a lot more than I thought of Jong Ho.

Considering his pleading, I put away my Awakened license.

And then grabbed his hands.

“Yes. Min-Cheol. Good decision. Let’s go talk by the bench over there.”

“Hello.”

No matter how much he clings onto me, physically I was a lot stronger than him.

Holding onto his hand, I threw him far.

Even if he was thrown, Jong Ho was an Awakened. He shouldn’t be hurt.

As he flew, he cried my name with a tearful face.

Even now, if I think of him crying out, I could only snicker.

“Min. Cheol!”

“Yes. Yes. Min-Cheol isn’t dead.”

Noon, in the midst of hunting with Jong Ho...

A line of luxurious black sedans were driving in.

Jong Ho, who was looking at his status window with glee looked towards it.

“Some young master is going around it seems.”

“Young master?”

A girl left the car.

She seemed to my age.

Two men stood by, one each to her sides.

Her armor and a staff in hand did not seem that luxurious.

It probably wasn't made by a blacksmith.

Those two weren't the only bodyguards.

Around the dungeon, many people with black suits were stationed.

All were highly alert, maintaining their distance.

Looking at this absurd situation, Jong Ho spoke.

“I heard Ilseong CEO's granddaughter had Awakened. Looks like that's her?”

“Are you talking about that huge company Ilseong? TV. Air conditioner?”

“Yeah. Korea's third biggest company. That's right.”

“But why would the granddaughter be sent to the dungeon then?”

“Min-Cheol. Do you see the Awakened around her? And the others around her.”

“Yes. I see. There are a lot.”

“I don't know about the person on the right, but the one on the left. The person who has half his face covered with a mask is ‘Yoon Jong-sun’. A ranker who's one of the top magicians in Korea.”

“Oho. He looks like your average neighbor... but he's famous.”

“When the explosion took place in the central plant center, he's one of the ones who prevented the damage from extending further.”

“Then why is someone so important next to a kid like her? Do they know each other?”

“That kid just wants to go around sightseeing the different levels of the dungeons. Otherwise why would they come here? Yoon Jong-sun is probably being supported by the company, as no matter how much money you have, you can’t always get Awakened essences and rare items. ‘You lend the company power, and in return be rewarded with tremendous rewards’ is what I’m saying.”

“I see. Still, the granddaughter of that CEO is just a little kid.”

“Kid? It looks like there only is a year or two differences? Why are you cosplaying as an elder!”

“I’m jealous. No need to worry about money, and born into a family where your grandpa is a CEO. And Awakened on top of that? I’m here struggling because buying a weapon seems wasteful... After the dungeon tour is over, maybe I should ask to be carried to a level 26 dungeon.”

“Don’t even look at them, just think of them as people who were on another level since birth. What can you do. Ah! And don’t forget. I’m someone who was happy about buying an armor that costed me 4 billion!”

Laughing at each other’s poor jokes, we continued the battle of the poor Awakened.

Well, we’re not really poor since we’re Awakened.

The conversation continued for a while, but we watched them the entire time.

Until they entered the dungeon and disappeared from our sights.

Comparing myself to those who were geared, I looked pathetic.

Unlike others, I had infinite mana.

With this ability, I was able to grow at rate 10’s of times faster.

But what if I was able to get items on top of this ability? Wouldn’t

something amazing occur?

I couldn't help but be greedy.

One of the reasons why I thought this way was due to the 'Louver's Bracelet'.

I needed equipment that wouldn't just raise stats, but ones that give special abilities.

That's why I was planning to obtain the Louver set from the level 18 dungeon.

With the original goal of an M/A rank weapon as well.

I heard the abilities of Louver's ring and necklace from Jong Ho on the way back.

The ring synergized incredibly well with the bracelet.

When attacked by magic, it could absorb the magic energy.

Naturally, that absorbed power would go straight to the bracelet.

It had quite the synergizing effect.

The necklace on the other hand, it a completely different effect.

It had chance for any skill casted to ignore the target's defense and magic resist.

If that's the case, a magician could hunt where magic attacks do not work.

How convenient it would be. I wouldn't even have to expend any effort in getting a strength based weapon.

But due to the fact that the percentage for it occurring was so low, it was gear that wasn't used that often.

What I was looking for was the set effect from wearing all three.

The 'Louver's Protection'.

When wearing all the named items, a set effect occurs.

From the level 18 dungeon I could clear and onwards, named

monsters start to appear from time to time.

Out of the set effects, Louver's Protection was a decent one.

If you stand in the aura that spread from the wearer's feet, you could absorb monster souls like the reaper Louver did.

Unlike Louver who turned the absorbed soul's abilities as his own, it became a shield that covered the weaknesses of those affected.

Everyone in a party, including myself, could receive this effect, but that factor did not concern me.

If I could obtain this set, I would not have to cast shields in dungeons that I can clear swiftly.

It was a set effect only for hunting.

What item is better than letting me hunt safely and quickly?

Making Jong Ho wait at the entrance, I pulled all the mobs recklessly.

After moving past his field of vision, I slaughtered them all.

Showing Jong Ho my abilities made me a little uneasy, but the real reason was this.

The two main skills I used were the Gravity Laser and Fire Shock. Both skills could not select targets.

Even if you wait at the entrance, the experience you get is the same.

There was no need to stay close.

It would only increase the risks.

Especially since both skills were Awakened, if it hit Jong Ho who was in his early level 60's, it would result in a fatal injury.

After killing the last mob Louver, I headed towards the center of the dungeon.

Since 20 min has passed, Jong Ho should be coming to the center as well.

I saw Jong Ho far away in the dark dungeon.

“Hm?”

But something was off.

If I met Jong Ho, that means this is the center of the dungeon, but an exit hadn't appeared.

“What. Why is there no exit? Did I miss one? That shouldn't be.”

“Aren't you done killing Louver?”

“Yeah. I finished and headed this way.”

“Killing the boss and Louver who appeared last, why isn't the exit appearing?”

“Hm, that's odd. I'll go look around once more.”

“Wait. Maybe.....”

“Hm? What is it? Do you have an idea?”

Instead of answering, he turned back towards the way he came from, and started to swing wildly with his sword.

Chapter 36 - Exp Continues To Rise (3)

Jong Ho continued to swing his knife at thin air.

‘Did he lose his mind because the exit won’t appear?’ was what I thought.

“Hyung, what are you doing? Why are you continuing to swing at thing air.....”

“Min-Cheol. Where did you hunt at?”

“Monsters? I hunted at the end of the dungeon.”

“Yeah? Then turn around and go back towards where you caught them. And cast AoE whenever you have the AoE.”

“Huh. Are you okay hyung? Tell me the reasoning.”

Looking at his face, I asked.

But why? He was smiling brightly.

‘Wow... Feels like I have to find a mental hospital.’

“Why are you so excited?”

“Mimic!”

“Hm? Mimic? Hyung, how many fingers am I holding up?”

I stopped Jong Ho’s wild slashing and held up two fingers.

It looks like I’m joking around, but I was being serious.

Jong Ho laughed half-heartedly, but the happiness in his smile did not fade.

“Two. Who do you think I am!”

“No. Think about it hyung. All the monsters are taken out, but the exit doesn’t open. But the person who came in with is laughing like a madman while swinging his knife. What do you think? It’s scary so let’s hear the reason why.”

“Ah. I didn’t tell you? I guess I forgot because I was excited.”

“Did your return to your senses?”

“Hey! There is a monster left in the dungeon!”

“What are you saying. I beat the hidden boss and the final boss, Louver.”

“Have you heard of a mimic?”

“You kept saying ‘mimic mimic’, but what are you talking about?”

“Treasure. Idiot. One Piece!”

“Ha... do I need to hit you?”

“Sorry. It’s a treasure chest. You can’t tell what’s in it until you take it down.”

“Where is it? Don’t tell me you are ‘stabbing wildly since the monster is invisible’ or something like that.”

He smiled and nodded his head.

“Really?”

“Quickly, turn around and look for it. It shows its face when you hit it once. The person who finds it first should bring it back.”

“Are you telling the truth?”

“Did I ever lie to you?”

“Okay!”

The mimic monster was a funny one.

Gravity Laser, which hits all enemies within its range, could not target it.

It was in perfect stealth.

I was retracing my steps, casting Lightning Spray.

From the center to the end of the dungeon, my curiosity was slowly turning into rage.

To confirm a wider range, I casted Fire Shock every time it came off cooldown.

It was at that moment.

Jong Ho said the ‘mimic’ is a monster shaped like a box.

And this sound surely came from a box made of wood.

My vision that was only on the ground that I treaded changed as I looked around me, and I could see it ‘hop hop’-ing away from me.

“Found you. Come here!”

It was just as Jong Ho said.

It was a chest that looked straight out of pirate movie, holding a ton of treasures.

Instead of giving it a nice greeting, I casted Lightning Spray.

It stuck out its tongue from within and started to madly dash away.

At this rate, I’d be further away from Jong Ho.

I started to spam cast Frozen Orb at it.

I was planning to freeze it solid and bring it back.

But it was a F ranking skill, and it was a monster from a level 18 dungeon.

Despite hitting it countless of times, it only moved faster.

“Damn it. Glacial Field, I’ll learn it for sure!”

Constantly casting Teleport every 3 seconds the cooldown came up, and ran at it as fast as possible.

Noise filled the silent dungeon, like the steps of two race horses.

It didn’t take long for me to overtake it.

I wanted to spam skills at it, but decided to hold off.

It would be good to hunt it together with Jong Ho.

Now it was running the other way around.

I was able to make out the faint outline of Jong Ho swinging his knife in the air.

“Hyung!”

Hearing me yell, Jong Ho stopped slashing and turned around.

I don’t think anyone could be mad at his bright smile.

The fashion terrorist’s new nickname became the ‘smiling angel’.

“Hurry up! Hurry!”

“On my way. Coming.”

Caught between Jong Ho and I, the mimic couldn’t do anything but rattle in place.

“Hyung, should I beat it down with skills?”

“No no. You have to beat it to death.”

“Are you stressed out?”

“That’s not it. It has to be hit a certain amount of times, either skills or sword swinging, to have it open.”

“Ah. Is that so?”

“Punching is its password.”

I wasn’t very pleased with that news.

Pulling up my sleeves, I began to punch it.

“Run! Running the other way?”

The more times I punched, the wider it opened its mouth.

Soon, the chest opened, and it stopped to moving.

However, there was nothing inside.

It was then.

It made a puking noise as it died.

“Done!”

“Wow... does it usually give out this much?”

“No clue. This is the first time I’ve seen it. It’s amazing for sure.”

“Agreed. Let’s take and go. Hyung.”

Since there wasn’t much time left before the dungeon ended, we quickly grabbed everything and ran out.

Since we worried that we’d get robbed, we quickly headed to Jong Ho ‘s car.

Jong Ho said it was his first time finding a mimic too.

We had enough loot to fill half of a military duffle bag.

“Hyung. We’ll count the B ranking blood stone later. Let’s look at the items first?”

“Yeah, let’s do that.”

Glancing over, 6 items dropped.

With one hand I pulled out the loot, while the other hand used the smart phone to pull the encyclopedia app.

The first match I got was the shoes.

Jong Ho couldn’t help but exclaim.

“Wow! ‘Titan Boots’! I wasn’t sure before since it was dark and we were rushing, but it’s the real deal!”

“Is it good?”

Jong Ho ‘s word made me hurry.

I quickly searched up Titan Boots.

At the same time, ‘human Awakened Encyclopedia’ Jong Ho continued to explain.

“Lucky. Min-Cheol! Even if you hunt for a long time, it will be really difficult to get boots better than this.”

“It’s that good?”

“Yeah! You saw Yoon Jong-sun before we entered, right? The boots he was wearing was this one. Immune to status effects, the Titan Boots! The people who own these boots is 10? No! Less than 5. You can throw away everything else with just this...!”

The phone returned the results.

-Titan Boots—

Immune to all status effects.

Increased movement speed.

It was an ability beyond words.

Immune to all forms of status effects.

Magician’s ice magic.

Shaman, assassins, and necromancer’s poison.

Warrior and priest’s slows.

All of them would become useless against me.

I had obtained something amazing.

“Hyung. What do I do?”

“What do you do! You take off your clothes and run around the track field a hundred times while holding onto the boots, celebrating!”

“Let’s look at the other stuff too. I’m still trying to process.”

“Okay!”

Out of the loot, there were three skill books.

“Should we check the skill books first?”

“Devil Avatar. Il-sum. Piercing Sword. Those are the drops.”

“Oh. Since it dropped on random, I was worried it would drop stuff below D rank. Thank goodness.”

“Hyung, did you not learn Il-sum and Piercing Sword?”

“No. Not yet. If you sell it at the store, you should be able to get 2 billion at least?”

“Hm? Hyung, you said you didn’t learn it yet.”

“Yeah I didn’t learn it yet. But you learned Piercing Sword already.”

“Why are you doing this? Do we not know each other?”

“Yeah. We are strangers.”

“I do agree. But still take these two, hyung. Learn them right away.”

“Min-Cheol. If it wasn’t for you, would hyung be able to go in the dungeon? I’m already feeling guilty for the level ups. Please don’t do this.”

“Okay. Then I’ll just give it to a stray dog passing by.....”

“Stop! From the mimic onward, are you going to keep joking around?”

“Heh, I knew it. Hurry up and learn it. I’ll be taking Devil Avatar.”

-Devil Avatar—

Usable Class: Summoner (Other classes have 10 times the mana cost) Mana Cost: 2000 (Per skill leveled, mana cost increases by 10%) Skill Information: Summons Devil Avatar

As the skill level rises, the summoned damage increases.

It only attacks those the summoner deems as enemies.

Cooldown: 60 minutes.

Duration: Until the summoned dies.

Skill Rank: A

Additional Explanation: Summoned will be at random from one of the three. Fire user, frost user, and lightning user. (Per 100 skill level, summoned number will increase by 1.) Skill Book Estimated Price: ????

“Do you know anything about Devil Avatar?”

“Summoner classes are rare, so I don’t know that well, but I heard that if they grow well, they display the power of two Awakened. That’s why you can’t ignore a summoner. Wow! The skill is A ranked.”

“That’s true, but the mana cost is 2,000? ‘Is this made with the intent to be used?’ is the thought I get.”

“Of course, if you’re not a summoner you can’t use it. Where would you get the 10 times inflated cost of 20,000 mana? That would mean you’d have to put in 4000 stat points in mana, but that would mean that you’re level 800. Impossible.”

That’s right. You get 5 stat points per level.

To get 20,000 mana, you’d need to put points into mana only until you’re level 800.

That’s why there was zero percent chance that anyone but a summoner would use this skill.

“So it’s really strong?”

“Yeah, from what I know. Since I can’t see an estimated price, looks like it’s a rare skill book. Should I look for information regarding it?”

“No. I’ll keep it. I got a hobby for collecting skill books.”

“Wow... Are you that well off?”

“Should I start raising an extinct cheetah as a pet?”

“Pfft. Let’s go check the rest of the loot.”

Going to the rear seats of the car, we flipped the bag and spilled everything out.

It was because all the equipments were about the same size as the blood stones, so it was hard to find things.

It was then that I saw something that I could not help but be happy to see.

“Hyung. Do you have any skills that are level 100?”

Chapter 37 - Exp Continues To Rise (4)

These cute little things, finally revealing themselves.

Awakened Essences.

“I just hit level 63 right now. I only have one skill that’s over level 90.”

“Is that so? Even if you’re level 63, you don’t normally reach skill level 100?”

“Of course. That’s obvious. Mana is limited, and the experience required to level up skills is enormous.”

“Hm... Hyung. I think I found something funny to show you.”

“What’s that?”

Jong Ho’s eyes widened as he fumbled through the stones.

He opened his palm to uncover three Awakened Essences.

For over three months, I had spent at least 12 hours a day, or up to 18 hours a day, hunting without any breaks.

Even with that, I was only able to earn 2 Awakened Essences.

But with the mimic, I had just earned three.

Jong Ho did not look like he could close his mouth anytime soon.

Jong Ho said that he was able to earn an Awakened Essence through party hunting once.

But he had to share the profit between 8 members.

The records in the trading center show that since the profit was split between 9 members, it became obvious to anyone that these were low leveled players.

Jong Ho continued to speak.

“I’m continued to be surprised. Really.”

“Hyung. I’m almost scared of opening the duffle backpack.”

“Don’t you have one or two skills that are near level 100?”

“Of course. There are a few.”

‘Plenty of skills begging to be Awakened’ is the truth though.

“That’s good. You’ll need the Awakened Essences soon.”

“Still, you should take one, hyung. It doesn’t come by often. Once you get a skill to level 100, how could I let you wait?”

“I’ll say I received the skill books because they were warrior class only. But this isn’t.”

“Should I feed it to the hounds?”

“Yeah. This is something I wouldn’t receive even if it was fed to the hounds. I’ve lived my life by reading people and keeping my pride. Don’t make me doubt anymore.”

“Stubborn.”

“Yeah! Being a hyung, how can I live depending only on you? Let’s see the rest of the gear.”

Jong Ho rubbed his nose once with his finger, and began to search through the equipments buried under all the blood stones.

It’s little habits like this that make it impossible to hate him.

I also joined Jong Ho’s search.

“Looks like all the gear is useless?”

“Why? You don’t have any mana rings. Stop using that skull ring. The ring and necklace raises your mana, so you can use it.”

“Not pretty. I have a thing called preference, so I’d appreciate it if you let me stick to it.”

“Sounds like you’re very spoiled. You sure you’re not going to use it?”

“Yes. Stones and the gear are going to be sold, and I’ll give you half. If you won’t even receive this, I’m not going to meet you

again.”

“You’re just like a pumpkin farmer. Thanks!”

The items we acquired through hunting with Jong Ho were amazing.

Three Awakened Essences, skill books, blood stones, and the rare Titan Boots.

It wouldn’t have been possible without the mimic.

It was the first time Jong Ho had seen a mimic, and he had been Awakened for years.

I felt as though the mimic’s tongue that was sticking out would appear in my dreams for the next couple of days.

The amount summoned by ‘Devil Avatar’ had increased by two.

It was due to arriving at skill level 100.

Due to the 60 minutes cool down, it bothered me a lot.

But thankfully I didn’t only earn 1 skill experience for summoning it.

The enemies hit by the summoned’s skills gave experience as well.

Red. Blue. Yellow. These are what they are called.

Personally, I liked Blue, since it could cast frost magic.

With one cast, there would be days when two Blues would come out.

I only had Frost Orb as far as frost magic would go, so I needed frost magic that would slow down my enemy’s movement.

The spot was being filled by Blue instead.

The 4m avatar displayed some incredible destructive force.

At level 100, they could slow down the movement of the level 18

monsters just by being near them.

Something similar to a frost aura.

Avatars didn't only attack with magic.

Each hand held a giant sword.

The shape was something like that of table knife.

Their attacks, both physical and magic, would freeze opponents solid. How much the mobs froze depended on how many times they attacked.

The sword attacks were physical, but it had effects as though if it was enchanted.

From the sky rained icicles while the avatar swung its giant sword.

Kind of made me feel bad for the monsters.

The avatar's weakness was that they were mortal.

Fire Shock and Gravity Laser caused friendly fire damage.

I could put shields on them and freely cast magic myself.

However, taking care of it myself felt better.

In dungeons where only physical attacks work, it was obvious that they would prove useful.

Also, the summoned would attack until its life force ceased.

Which means that after I summon them, I would be able to freely cast spells with both my hands.

After summoning them for the first time and ending the hunting with them...

I had the worry of 'How will I bring these giants around?'

With the pressure it exuded and its size, people may mistake it as a portal explosion.

But I found out that you could shrink the Devil Avatars to the

point where they could fit in your pockets.

Anytime at my will.

They've become something like my own Pokemon.

With their size reducing to that of a finger, they looked a lot cuter than I thought they'd be.

From using the Devil Avatar, I was able to find out the potentials of a summoner.

Fast skill leveling, destructive power, survivability, and even cuteness.

I became really greedy for another high ranking summoner skill.

It's been about half a month since I've hunted with Jong Ho.

I had learned 'Iceberg' and 'Meteor Call'.

Both were A+ ranking skills, displaying devastating force and price.

But with the vast amounts of B ranking stones and gear earned from the mimic, I was able to amass an earning far more than what I thought I could obtain.

With all the money saved up until now, along with half a month's worth of hunting, I purchased them.

When I first obtained the Awakened Essences, I thought to sell them so I could afford to purchase more skills.

While this method would speed up my growth immediately, it would be a heavy loss if you considered the future.

I would only be earning more and more money, to the point where I'd be sick of it.

But no matter how much money you had, you couldn't obtain Awakened Essences.

You'd know it just by looking at Yoon Jong-sun, who worked

under Ilseong.

I used one of the essences on Reflect Shield.

Compared to the other shields, the Reflect Shield was superior.

It was a worthwhile investment since it would increase the reflect chance as well as the damage reflected back.

The other two leftovers, I was definitely going to use it on the A+ rank spells.

Originally I was planning to buy Glacial Field, as it did more damage than I thought.

It had an AoE freezing crowd control effect as well.

But I could get the freezing crowd control from the Devil Avatar.

Of course due to the summoned being random out of the three types, there was a chance that Blue won't come out.

But to hunt faster, I needed stronger skills first. That was my choice.

Out of all the skills I've learned so far, none of them had a cast time.

But both Iceberg and Meteor Call had one.

At level 1, both skills needed 5 minutes to cast.

And both had a cool down of 5 minutes.

Thus, it took 10 minutes to be able to finish casting it again.

Thankfully for every 20 skill levels, the cool down would be reduced by 10%.

So if I was able to Awaken these skills and get them up to level 100 again, I could use them without any limit.

It'd only apply to me though.

From level 1, it used up 4,000 mana, and as the spell leveled, so did the cost.

Only a magician who put all his points into the mana stat until level 160 could use one of these spells once when it's at level 1.

To a regular Awakened, forget about getting it Awakened, you couldn't even reach level 100.

To test the destructive capabilities of these spells firsthand, I entered the dungeon after obtaining the skills.

Since I was equipping the Titan Boots, my movespeed had increased more than two times.

Running to the end of the dungeon didn't even take 5 minutes.

It was a massive upgrade from the Boots of Haste, which took 10 minutes.

Arriving at the end of the dungeon with 10 monsters in tow, I used the skill.

From what I've seen at the guild pvp, both skills seemed to exist only for the purpose of complete annihilation.

First test was with the Meteor Call.

Above the rabble of monsters flew down a flaming meteor.

The poison naga was instantly decimated due to its weak defensive stats.

The corpses that were left quickly disintegrated, not even leaving ashes behind.

After the meteor falls, it continues to explode and causes damage over time.

The next skill was Iceberg.

The griffons flying above that wasn't directly hit still flew about without any major injuries.

However.

A massive iceberg came forth from the earth, swallowing them whole.

Without even being able to use Final Attack, they were instantly trapped in the ice and became frozen chicken.

The insides of the iceberg continued to split apart and freeze again.

Almost like mixing puzzle pieces or a rubik's cube.

Within 5 seconds, the 4 griffons had been ripped apart to pieces until I couldn't recognize them anymore.

Only a level 1 skill.

But the damage it caused was more than sufficient to surprise me.

Since it had a cool down and cast time, I couldn't level it up quickly. However, I was certain that I must level them up by any means possible.

Entering the dungeon again, I casted both spells at the same time.

Both skills were of the same level.

However, both skills canceled each other out as if to remind me that they're both polar opposites, causing zero damage to the monsters.

If I cast a ton of buffs on myself and debuff the enemies, nothing would be a match against these spells. That's if the dungeon mobs weren't immune to spells though.

“Does casting Meteor Call and Iceberg on each hand still raise the experience? Or doesn't it?”

Chapter 38 - Smash, Charge

Originally, I planned to use the level 18 dungeon until somewhere around level 150 to 170.

However, I had already hit level 148.

The dungeons following are immune to magic.

Since I only had 'Piercing Sword' for physical attacks, I needed a plan.

'Devil Avatar' had a physical based basic attack, but without the magic effect, it was pretty weak.

I had two choices.

First, learn physical attack based skills to go into level 19 to 21 dungeons.

Secondly, skip them and go to the level 22 dungeon.

My classmate Taesung had said that the highest ranking dungeon that was solo cleared was level 28.

It was done by Korean ranker 'Cheu Hyo-sun', and no one has topped it in the world so far.

Entering the dungeon is different from an online game.

Failing to clear the dungeon in a game would just result in relogging.

But in reality, if you can't hold out for 60 minutes, your cold corpse would disappear with the dungeon.

In 10 minutes, I was able to obtain 2,000,000 experience.

One type of monster gave 200,000 experience, and about 10 to 15 of them appeared, so technically I am actually obtaining more.

Even with the massive amount of experience required to level up from 148, I should be able to level twice a day by focusing only on hunting.

My decision was to stay at the level 18 dungeon until an M/A ranking weapon dropped.

I'm not forsaking growth for a weapon.

And I'm not looking only at the experience and forsaking the weapon.

The boss that appears in the dungeon is a 'hidden boss'.

What this means is that there is a higher chance for Awakened Essences to drop compared to a normal dungeon.

Also there is the guaranteed drop of a skill book.

There was no place safe like this while giving me this many benefits.

I met the magician ranker Yoon Jong-sun from the time I've hunted with Jong Ho once more.

This wasn't the first time.

After the first time we met, we met in front of the level 18 dungeon 3 times.

Escorting Ilseong's granddaughter, our eyes met only once.

The first words he spoke were...

"You, what kind of an ability do you possess?"

Even if you were an Awakened, you could not stop the ravages of time.

The portals began spawning 40 years ago.

Within a year, Awakened began to appear.

Those with the highest chance of Awakening were at the ages between 15 to 19.

Those that became Awakened then now are rankers in the ages of 50s to 60s.

The Awakened age just like normal people.

Of course, only their looks fade.

Their bodies however are still affected by the stats they've obtained.

But they are still people.

Each person had a determined lifespan.

Depending on how well you take care of yourself, there are some differences.

No matter how much ability you had, you could not avoid aging and death. Destiny is inescapable.

I had the appearance of a child, no matter how you looked at it.

And Jong Ho was in his late 20s. He did not appear old.

But with two Awakened entering a level 18 dungeon and coming out within 30 minutes with all the loot.

Yoon Jong-sun probably guessed that one of us had an incredible ability.

Especially with a kid wearing Titan Boots, which not even a total of 5 people own.

It was to be expected that he would become incredibly curious.

After seeing us, he came to the dungeon every day.

Not finding Jong Ho, but seeing me enter it solo, he had come up to speak with me.

“Dunno. Is there a reason for me to tell you?”

“No... Ah. Sorry for the late introductions. My name is Yoon Jong-sun.”

Expecting other's to know his name, he must've had a lot of confidence.

“Yes. I'm aware you're famous. I'm Kim Min-Cheol.”

“I don’t know what ability you have, but seems we’ll meet again.”

“Since people are unpredictable, suppose that could happen.”

“If that day comes, I hope we are on the same side.”

“.....”

“Do take care.”

With a gruff voice that matched his looks, he turned and walked away.

I could only stare at his figure aghast.

I felt like I was shaken by something huge.

From what I heard from Jong Ho, he was the person who had stopped the second wave of destruction after the central plant center exploded.

He who had a righteous attitude like that to tell me such had brought many thoughts to my mind.

Late afternoon. Noblesse’ guild building.

The elevator from the underground 15th floor that Park Hyun rode was slowly rising to her office floor.

“Jhin. How goes the work I asked for?”

She spoke as if knowing that he was there.

Then.

From her shadows, a dark figure rose.

Jhin. An incredibly skilled assassin who used one of the highest S ranking skill called ‘Shadow Step’.

Assassins. Called a murderer more often than not, they excelled in something other than hunting.

They could deal massive damage to a single target.

Masking their presence, they could stab into their weaknesses.

With a fake smile, Jhin spoke to Park Hyun.

“Those two? Looks like they’re dogs that cannot follow the master’s orders.”

“I already know that from the reports. No reason for him to meet Jae Hyuk and he’s drifted away from Sangmin...”

“That’s why I did something myself. Instead of those two, I spied on the kid Kim Min-cheol.”

“As expected of you.”

“You should probably go ahead with your plan a lot earlier than you think you should.”

“What do you mean?”

“From the two days I’ve been observing him, he’s been heading to the level 18 dungeon. By himself.”

“What? No matter how fast his mana regenerates, he shouldn’t be growing any further than being able to clear the succubi dungeon for now.”

“I say only what I saw. The rest is up to you.”

“.....”

“How goes the underground project?”

“I was actually on my way from checking the progress of it.”

“Oho.... The result?”

“Failure... But there seems to be some progress. Hard to match the conditions.”

“The brass is waiting for good news. Then....”

The red glow from his sword reflected his eyes behind the mask.

After finishing his words, he hid himself in the shadows once more.

“The project is enough of a headache, but him too.....”

Gwidon was hit on the head with Meteor Call.

It's been some time since it used the barrel in its left hand.

Swinging the iron mace with its last strength, it perished from the meteor.

[500,000 exp obtained.]

“Hm?”

Something big rose above its corpse.

I wanted to run towards it and check it immediately, but Louver came charging.

“Come forth. Come!”

The level 18 dungeon's hidden boss and the Louver were easy as a level 1 dungeon clear.

Not even paying attention to its corpse, I turned around and headed towards Gwidon's corpse.

The item dropped from it finally came into view.

And I yelled loudly with my eyes wide open.

I pretty much lived at this dungeon.

Everything was to obtain this item.

“It finally dropped!”

M/A ranking '[Banwol Jincheon](#)' had dropped.

Half-moon of Jincheon.

It was one of the biggest one hand swords out there.

Living up to its name, it had a crescent shape of the moon and glowed as if moonlight reflected off of it.

The handle had a small hole at the bottom of it without any decorations or patterns.

Even with the size of 1.5m, it was incredibly light.

Perhaps it was due having nearly 600 strength.

But I had about the same strength when I was using 'Black Sword'. Something felt different about this sword.

I held the sword tightly in my hand.

Strength: $[585+20+400+100] = 1105$

I felt the change reflected on the status window.

Banwol Jincheon raised my strength by 400.

On top of that, it raised total strength by 10%.

I swung it through the empty air.

The large sword's thin and sharp slashing sound filled the dungeon.

Now I had achieved half of what I wanted.

You could equip up to two of single handed weapons like Banwol Jincheon.

Even at Awakened markets, it was hard to see any warriors with this sword.

It was proof that monsters had a terribly low drop rate for weapons.

But compared to others, I could clear faster and much more than them.

And even if the sword dropped, they'd have to share the earnings between the standard 6 people in the party.

If you weren't important in the party, you couldn't even get the

sword even if it dropped in front of you.

Gwidon dropped another skill book, and dropped a jewel with the same color as the one from Kelvacore.

It must be a jewel that raised your strength by 30.

Weapons from monsters can be embedded with a jewel as well.

However, unlike the swords made from blacksmiths, there was no spot for the jewel to be put in.

I would have to get the jewel processed and put it in the small hole at the end of the handle.

The number of jewel I could have processed into the weapon was only one.

It wasn't like the smith's weapon that could have two embedded, but I couldn't do anything about it.

The processed jewels couldn't even be recovered.

But this weapon was going to be with me for a while.

Until I get an M/S ranking weapon that is.

I took all the drops from Gwidon.

Without a thought, I headed towards the center of the dungeon.

But then I felt something was wrong.

Felt like I forgot something important.

There was plenty of time until the dungeon despawned.

“Louver..... Did I check its drops?”

With a doubt in mind, I went back.

Since I was so hyped over Banwol Jincheon, I hadn't even glanced at Louver.

With the massive movespeed gained from the Titan Boots, it didn't take long for me to arrive.

I was shocked as soon as I arrived.

There was a single ring above Louver's corpse.

"What in the world..."

With one clear, I was able to obtain both Banwol Jincheon and Louver's ring.

I had ran this dungeon hundreds of times, but it felt like I ran it thousands of times.

All the items dropped had been basic stuff.

Of course, there was the mimic.

But now that these dropped, I felt like all the hard work wasn't a waste.

Now I had two pieces from the Louver set.

I was glad that the ring that had incredible synergy with the bracelet had dropped first.

Louver's ring absorbs mana and feeds it to the bracelets.

There were no monsters in the dungeon currently that used magic attacks.

However, the dungeons after and possible attacks from other Awakened could use magic attacks. I could absorb their attacks and use an empowered skill in return.

I put on the ring on my finger.

No stat gains.

However, the ring and the bracelet reacted to one another with a blue glow.

If I was able to obtain the necklace as well, I should have no need to cast shields within the dungeon.

A sword. And Louver's necklace.

If I was able to obtain these, I should be able to rise to greater

heights.

I felt strength come to my legs as I headed over to the dungeon once more.

“Let’s get to work.”

Chapter 39 - Smash, Charge (2)

The daily repetitive hunting and selling drops.

And the massive amount of earnings matching it.

I was preparing to enter the dungeon at my usual time.

Then.

I felt a massive crash and vibration that shook me.

My shield had a crack in it as if a bullet was embedded in bullet proof glass.

“What! Who’s the little shit!”

My sights came on a few Awakened assembled at the entrance.

My shield had recovered at an incredible rate, regenerating thanks to my endless mana.

A situation where it looked like I swore loudly to myself.

To my yelling, everyone looked at me as if I was a weirdo.

But I definitely saw. And felt.

After leaving the guild, I made it a habit to always think of the shield cool down and constantly cast it to make sure it stays up.

A possibility that made me uneasy, I guess.

But now. Someone had attacked me on my way to the dungeon.

If my shield level was low, it was an attack that was lethal.

A sharp and precise attack that aimed for my vitals.

I tried to predict where the swift attack came from.

I quickly looked around but couldn’t find anyone.

Someone accidentally casted a spell? No way.

Incredible power. Stealthing swiftly. Someone had targeted me.

And an incredibly skilled one at that.....

I forced myself to calm down and acted as if nothing happened.

If I let myself get controlled by emotions, I would only reveal more weaknesses.

My composure only lasted for a moment though.

I felt someone looking at me from the roof of a building.

It wasn't a distance where you could clearly make out a face, but it felt like he was smiling at me.

No, I was sure. He was laughing at me.

“.....”

I ground my teeth.

He turned around as if to say he did what he came to do.

Looking at that, I wanted immediately land a meteor where he was at.

Who could it be.

There was a couple that I had in mind.

But suddenly like this?

And after attacking, appearing atop the roof as if wanting me to see him.

‘It's not over. Just the beginning.’ – Is the message he was trying to send.

I didn't worry for long however.

‘Hm..... Is it happening like Jong Ho-hyung predicted?’

The face that appeared on my mind!

Noblesse's guild master Park Hyun.

It's been a couple months since I quit the guild, about the time that I'd let my guard down thinking I was safe.

If my thinking is correct, it was definitely her fox-like crafty self

who was behind this.

Her words that I didn't understand and skipped over.

'If you do not need a guild, do as you wish. But you don't know how life will turn out. If we do meet again and you return to us, I hope that you'll be with us.'

Thinking about the current situation, I could understand the meaning behind her words now.

She has already predicted my ability to a certain degree.

Otherwise she wouldn't have offered such an enticing contract for me to join.

But I do not think she knows that I am wary of her.

If she knew, she wouldn't say that as I quit and there would be no attacks like this.

Otherwise, after quitting, I'd disappear without a word.

I could also guess what she wants from me.

Instead of the constant danger, come over to the safe fenced side.

The image of me that reflected off her fox-like eyes was an 18 year old child.

'You'll soon understand thoroughly that I'm not such a weak opponent.'

I stared at where he stood for a while.

Seems it was time for me to make an important decision.

I'm sure the two goons and the midget hates me.

However. Hiring someone of that skill just because of revenge?

No matter how much money was involved, the chances were low.

And if they really did try getting at me, they'd attack until I was gravely wounded.

Also they would make sure that their identity would be exposed.

It was the first time I was attacked by an Awakened instead of monsters.

I could almost feel the massive shaking even now.

The call from Jong Ho came.

Just in case more issues would arise, I talked within the dungeon.

Of course I cleared out the dungeon first, and used the leftover time before the dungeon expired.

“How about it? Pretty sure?”

“Hm... No matter how I look at it, it’s done by Noblesse.”

“Hyung. There was nothing stuck to the shield. What skill was that?”

“Probably Assassin Weapon Throw, and an Awakened version at that.”

“That’s something assassins use, right?”

“Yeah. It’s a skill to throw a small weapon toward a single target with perfect precision, but once you Awaken it, you can pressurize air and make it invisible.”

“Not a ranged attack, but a single target skill. A skill like that is incredibly hard to level up, but on top of that he Awakened it?”

“Definitely high skilled.”

“Guess it starts now?”

“What are you planning to do?”

“..... If I can buy more time, I could crush them. But looks like they caught on and are trying to take care of me quickly? Instead of just waiting and doing nothing, it’s probably better to strike first.”

“You’re saying you’re going to charge Noblesse first by yourself?”

“Solo? I have a hyung.”

“.....”

Jong Ho's eyes were filled with worry.

But I had a plan in mind.

Even if I go in without a plan, I probably wouldn't lose.

Level 200s and 300s would only have 5 skills maxed at most.

Noblesse's guild master Park Hyun was only early level 200.

But I had gained 150 levels in 4 months.

And all skills obtained were at master level.

I was already raising Awakened skills at the moment.

The one thing that I could improve on was the lack of shields to protect myself.

The only shields I currently have are Reflect Shield, Frozen Shield, and Spirit Armor.

The Reflect Shield was Awakened for reflecting purposes.

The other two skills had their duration and damage absorbed increased drastically as their level rose. However, they still had a cool down.

In the fight ahead, I would have to block a huge amount of damage with my shields.

If my shields broke faster than I planned, the results would be obvious.

I sorted out my thoughts and spoke to Jong Ho.

"Hyung. Does the association vendor Mana Shield?"

"Mana Shield? Even at the association, it would be hard to buy."

"Is that so? Like Hold and Bind, there are just none on the market?"

"Mhm. It would be difficult to get one by using legal means."

"I see. Then I'll have to rely on the small fry."

“Hm? Small fry? What do you mean?”

“Don’t worry about it. I’ll go first.”

“Okay. If something happens, contact me. Don’t ask rashly!”

“Don’t worry about a thing.”

“Together... Never mind. Said it out of habit. In this serious situation, you’re able to joke? Get home quick.”

“Pfft. I’ll be going!”

I headed toward the small fry’s office.

Originally I approximately knew where to contact him, but when I moved to the safe house, I was able to find his business card.

Since there was a pile of it that I could find, he probably threw one down each time he visited.

I entered by smashing through the office door.

I only came to ask for a favor, but I remembered how he used to treat my poor door.

Of course, the pile of business cards played a part in angering me.

Their eyes widened as they stared at me blankly with jajangmyeon in their hands.

“Sorry. I remembered how you bashed my door down. Are you well?”

“..... So you came?”

The two goons tossed aside the bowls and hurried greeted me.

As they greeted me, I walked in front of the midget.

Looking at him dead in the eyes, I told what I came for.

“I was hit by an Assassin Weapon Throw today. I’m asking just in case. You didn’t, right?”

“Me... What... Oh! No way. That’s absurd.”

“Well, whatever. The mission this time is ‘Mana Shield’.”

“Huh?”

“I told you I don’t like repeating the same thing twice before.”

“Ah... Yes! Mana Shield. But the price can’t be compared with the previous items.....”

“Don’t worry about the costs; you just need to obtain it.”

“Yes.....”

“3 days. It’s urgent.”

“3 days is..... At least 1 we-”

One of the two goons spoke.

Before he could finish!

Around me were countless Banwol Jincheon’s coming out.

They should be aware of the weapon and Piercing Sword skill I have.

I casted the skill and asked.

“One week?”

Mr. Goon swallowed his words along with his food and continued.

“That’s not what I meant! 3 days. Plenty of time.”

“There’s one more thing I need to request.”

“What would it be....”

“I don’t want to do the trade face to face this time.”

“Yes. Not difficult at all.”

“Then I’ll be re-ly-ing on you.”

I said it as I stared down each of them one by one.

I never thought they could be this useful.

But there is a law in the world.

The law I'm talking about is how I get what I want and nobody gets hurt.

Well, not really my concern if these guys get hurt.

I left the midget's office.

3 days. I had to get 'Louver's Necklace' and another 'Banwol Jincheon' in 3 days.

I had the taxi change directions from the hunting grounds to the Awakened market.

If I get the right gear and weapon, I needed a physical attack skill to match it.

The skills I chose were 'Gigantic Whirl' and 'Typhoon Hole'.

I remembered 'Whirlwind' back in the guild war.

Spinning their body quickly to deal massive damage with the weapon held.

If Whirlwind had the range of 4 to 5m radius, Gigantic Whirlwind had 10m.

It was as if you Awakened the regular Whirlwind spell.

Whirlwind and Gigantic Whirlwind were both A ranking spells.

Then it would be obvious to use Gigantic Whirlwind over the other.

However both had a different rate of mana consumption.

Most warrior skills used up percentage of mana.

It would depend on the skill level, but the base was 3% for Whirlwind while 10% for Gigantic Whirlwind.

Same damage and same type of attack.

But the added range increased the mana consumed as well.

If one gets caught up in this skill, they'd be ripped apart like food in a blender.

If used with a massive amount of strength, it would make a huge impact against many opponents.

The next skill, 'Typhoon Hole'.

It was a skill mentioned in the additional information section of 'Eye of the Storm'.

The explanation stated that the skills have incredible synergy.

Eye of the Storm caused all living targets around the user to spin around the user, being dragged in closer and closer.

Typhoon Hole spun the other direction that Eye of the Storm did.

However, Typhoon Hole was an attack skill that incorporated sharp knife-like rain drops.

Eye of the Storm had increased damage dealt as it leveled, while Typhoon Hole spun the other way, dealing damage over time.

If both skills were leveled up, it will be able to display an incredible synergy.

"I'm here to purchase Gigantic Whirl and Typhoon Hole."

Chapter 40 - Smash, Charge (3)

Meteor Call and Iceberg weren't level 20 yet.

These were skills that would only level up quickly when hitting multiple opponents.

The level 18 dungeon only provided 10 to 15 monsters.

Other skills would be very weak at lower levels, so I headed for the manticore dungeon to level them up.

But even at level 1, these skills dealt insane amounts of damage.

So I didn't mind it that much.

Typhoon Hole and Gigantic Whirlwind.

A ranking attack skills.

If I leveled them up, they should display incredible amounts of damage with my strength stat that is over 1,000.

The fight between me and the guild will probably occur within the week.

I regretted not leveling my skills faster until I was faced with a crisis like this.

Like a bad author who writes right before the deadline.

I was planning to use the entire day to level up skills.

One day wouldn't be enough for A+ ranking skills that required a cast time and have cool downs.

Time to raise Eye of the Storm to max level as well. I've been procrastinating on that.

To see the synergy firsthand.

I entered the succubus dungeon that can only be hit with physical attacks.

It was to gain even a little bit of growth while leveling my skills.

Around evening when the leveling session was about done.

Meteor and Iceberg were level 40.

In 14 hours, I had raised them from 19.

An incredible feat only made possible by casting on hundreds of mobs.

Despite being hit by these powerful spells, they did not budge an inch due to their immunity to magic.

Even if considering high ranking magicians like Yoon Jong-sun, less than 1% of all magicians have leveled these mana-hungry spells to 40 .

A message came from the midget that a seller has appeared.

The trade will be occurring in his office.

[Please come to the office by 10.]

[Sure.]

The need for a good shield, which was my biggest worry, would finally be taken care of.

However, I did not have even a fraction of the money required to purchase the Mana Shield.

Money comes and goes.

Is that why I'm trading in person?

That I was planning to beat up and steal it from the seller?

No way. I won't do that to people whom caused me no harm.

I only become cruel to those whom cause me physical or mental harm.

I arrived near the midget's office.

In the parking lot, there were multiple cars I've not seen before.

Probably here to do the trade.

Since a hefty amount of currency was involved, not surprising.

Looking at them briefly, I moved on.

There was a man who seemed to be the seller inside the office.

Age probably around Jong Ho's?

Acknowledging each other briefly with our eyes, I asked the midget in a quiet voice.

"Looks young for someone selling such a high ranking shield?"

"Most people send young ones with some skill to trade. Nothing good comes out of learning each other's faces."

"You knew that, but decided to have the trade take place at the office?"

"Well, I'm not doing the trade. Just providing the location....."

"Not my concern. What's in that vault?"

My hand pointed at the huge vault behind the midget.

"Eh? What... really?"

"What do you mean. Isn't your job lending money and taking interest from it?"

"Well... That's true but....."

"I'm just borrowing it for a bit. Should I take it myself? Or do you wanna open it without any property damages?"

"....."

With a face that looked like he ate shit, he looked only at his feet. Passing him, I moved my body towards the vault.

Only then did he abruptly grabbed my arm.

"I'll! I'll open it."

"Thank you. I'll be talking with him to find out how much he wants."

“.....”

I went to the young seller on the sofa.

On the table was a small box made of oak.

It was obvious the skill book would be inside of it.

I spoke first.

“Hello.”

“Yes.”

From the moment we met, he did not let down his guard.

Well, he wasn't here to sell just any item.

And it was a direct trade in person, not through a middleman.

“Can I check the item first?”

“Sure.”

In the oak box was a skill book.

I pointed at the smartphone to him.

It was a gesture that I will be scanning it with my phone, and it seemed he understood.

He nodded his head and sipped on the coffee.

-Mana Shield—

Usable Class: Magician, Shaman (Other classes will gain no effect when used.) Mana Cost: Equal to the amount of damage received, both physical and magical.

Skill Introduction: Absorbs damage both physical and magical.

*When taking damage, drains mana instead of health.

*With one cast, continues until all mana is lost. (Can be canceled by user.) *(??)ranking skills cannot be absorbed.

*(??)ranking monster's attack cannot be absorbed.

CD: None. (Channeled)

Skill Ranking: A

Additional Explanation: Casts continuously with one hand.

ex) Using the Mana Shield leaves only the other hand to cast spells.

Skill Book Cost: ???

It's the real thing.

The Mana Shield, a skill that lets you have cheat-like defense.

Of course if all my mana was consumed, the shield would collapse and I would cease casting it.

But how can I use up all my mana when I have infinite amounts of it?

And I didn't need to level up the skill.

Only the mana cost would be reduced as it leveled up.

It didn't affect the amount of damage absorbed.

However there was a bit of a problem.

While casting mana shield, I wasn't able to dual cast spells from each of my hands.

One hand had to be casting Mana Shield.

Another issue was that it cannot block ?? ranking skills.

But skills categorized not by ranking had only rumors floating about them.

It was true that I had no solid information.

From what I've gathered, there are Awakened that have learned them.

I had no information on what skill and the abilities of the said skills however.

Well this shouldn't be a huge problem.

Casting another shield and quickly spamming spells with both hands, I'll give up one hand to cast Mana Shield if the other Shields lose durability, just to be on the safe side.

And skills beyond being ranked, highly doubt the members of Noblesse has them.

Maybe those in the upper ranks.

While I was thinking about the skills, the man sipping the coffee spoke.

"Are you done confirming?"

"Yes. How much did they tell you it was?"

"It's something that you cannot get easily. With money....."

"Yes I know. You're not here to get an apple box filled with money, right?"

"....."

Quietly, he put the business card from his breast pocket onto the table.

On the back side of the card had instructions he received.

Seeing that, I stood up and headed towards the midget.

"Did you open it?"

"Yes....."

"Do you have two Awakened Essences?"

"Yes... Yes?? Not money, but Awakened Essences?"

"Why are you acting like this. I'm not taking them, just borrowing. And you know that it can't be bought with money?"

He looked at the vault as if his soul was lost.

It didn't take long to search the vault.

Within the vault, I could see there was a small space separately built in from the rest of the vault.

“Bingo.”

Without a doubt.

As if putting a golden cow in good care, he had stockpiled them well.

These stones the size of a thumb, I wonder why they're so expensive.

Exactly two.

To be honest, I knew that the Mana Shield would cost about two Awakened Essences.

And I currently owned two.

So if the midget didn't own any essences, I would have used mine to purchase them.

But here he is. A businessman who lives from earning interests off of what he has lent, a law abiding righteous citizen.

I was planning to borrow these essences for a bit.

For just a little while.

“I'll be borrowing these.”

He nodded with an expression of not regretting a thing in his life.

“And we don't need anything like paperwork or something, right? It's not like today is the first day we saw each other.”

“.....”

I went back to the table the seller was at.

Quietly, I set down two essences next to the wooden box.

With a solemn look, he confirmed the essences and put them in his breast pocket.

“Farewell then.”

He was trying to leave with the business card.

However I took the business card from his hand.

“I think we will be meeting each other often from now on, so I’ll be taking this. Is that okay?”

“Go ahead.”

“Then. We’ll be in touch.”

Not even looking back, I left the seat while learning Mana Shield on the spot.

The skill book started to glow and was absorbed completely into my body.

‘Mana Shield’

As I casted the spell, a blue barrier that outlined my body formed.

All shields I’ve received so far had a shape similar to a shell.

But the Mana Shield fit me like a glove.

I had one of the goons cast enchant on his weapon.

“Hit me as hard as you can.”

“Yes.”

Momentarily, I saw a smile creeping across his face, but turned a blind eye to it.

His enchanted knuckle directly dug through my chest.

But unlike what I expected, there was no massive ringing.

It was like all the shock was completely absorbed, and I’ve only felt a small vibration afterwards.

I couldn’t tell if my mana went down from the hit though.

Because I didn’t have a mana gauge to begin with.

Previously when his knuckle hit my Frozen Shield, massive

amounts of steam released and parts of the shield became eroded.

Mana Shields must be effective on another level compared to other shields.

Different from the shields that sacrifice itself to block attacks.

It completely absorbs damage and instead of depleting health, takes mana instead.

Looking at this, I didn't know if there was a skill fitting me any better.

I kept my amazement brief though.

Turning around, I saw the midget's face that was at the embodiment of someone who lost everything.

"Okay. By when do I need to pay back the two I borrowed? If you're coming to my house, please call ahead."

"No. Why would there be a time limit. But please... Please return them."

"Eh... These aren't cheap. How could I just take them from you? Anyways, thank you for today. I'll see you again."

"Yes....."

"Yes! Please head back."

Seems they haven't fixed the door that was broken yesterday.

I quietly snuck in and prepared casually, heading for the office.

"Teleport, Mana Shield for when I need to rest. Reflect Shield for when I'm hunting... I am the one who can block all attacks. I can't wait to see the look on Park Hyun's face."

Chapter 41 - Smash, Charge (4)

Time continued to past quickly without a care.

After the first hit, I allowed two more hits on me.

All of them were allies whom traveled with me.

But I didn't react at all.

But to even give a bigger hint towards me, some were wearing 'Empire' guild wear and attacking.

Each guild had uniforms bearing the mark of their guild.

Sending me a message by bringing Empire that has animosity towards Noblesse.

They were waiting with the thought of 'Treat him like a kid' or something.

Leading a cow out of the stables, then releasing predators around it.

They gave me the role of the 'cow'.

Attacking an herbivore like me.

The more I thought about it, the angrier I got.

The outside is dangerous, so head back in immediately?

My answer to that would be to 'annihilate both predators and the stable'.

The next day.

I will be ending things with Noblesse cleanly.

Jong Ho was worried and visited every day, asking if there is something he could do to help.

So I asked him to do a few things.

I needed evidence, logs and history about this current situation.

Let's say I completely destroyed the guild without any proof.

Due to the strict laws for the Awakened, I would be receiving quite the punishment.

Punishment? No. Probably an execution.

To prepare for that, I asked him to find about 5 people who knew how to operate heli-cameras.

And glasses that has a built in feature to record footage as well.

Of course, the best method is to annihilate them without it being noticed by anyone.

But for a massive battle to go unnoticed was nearly impossible.

That's why I made preparations in advance.

My ability would be exposed to the rest of the world, but I needed to show that the fight was justified.

If I'm lucky and have a chance to do so, I'll take care of business without drawing attention.

Think about it.

I just wanted to use my abilities to obtain massive amounts of money and live a peaceful, happy life.

But these goons won't leave me alone.

Something I learned while being bullied by Jae-Hyuk.

If someone tries to fight you, you shouldn't run away and fight back instead.

And I won't let any cheap excuses sway me otherwise.

I will show that my resolve is firm tomorrow.

I wasn't able to get Louver's Necklace in today's hunt.

However, I was able to get something I needed more: Banwol Jincheon.

Louver's necklace has a very low chance to ignore an attack, both magical and physical.

Low chance.

It was like fighting a boss online and hoping for a 0.1% chance crit to work.

Depending on such as low percentage.

And the set effect worked only inside the dungeon, absorbing the monsters' magical energy and turning it into a shield.

It didn't matter since I have the Mana Shield.

Banwol Jincheon in both hands.

$[610+20+400+400+286] = 1,716$

I gained 600 more strength than holding onto just one.

And if I added strength enhancing jewels?

Of course I couldn't recover the jewels, but I didn't think of it as a waste in the slightest.

I went to a blacksmith in a weapon shop nearby by the market.

The interior was luxurious, categorized clearly from section to section.

Weapons made by the blacksmith.

Under the bright lighting, a red light similar to that of Blood Stone colored one of the walls.

From small daggers to giant swords, mace, and even the Ranger's shortbows and longbows.

Looking at how well the equipments were made, I felt like I could trust the place somewhat.

"Anyone here?"

"Yes. Let's talk outside."

From one of the rooms in the shop, a man with a huge belly

appearing to be 50 years old walked out.

A man wearing a running shirt that revealed his neck to his chest.

Despite being pale, he was covered in black soot like his shirt that showed signs of hard labor.

“I’m trying to embed a jewel on my weapon.”

To my words, he put on a pair of thick glasses that hung by his neck.

“Is the weapon you’re hold Banwol Jincheon?”

“Yes. That’s correct. I’m hoping it can be taken care of here?”

“Oho..... Haven’t been able to see a decent weapon in a while.”

“Is it possible?”

“Of course. It’s doable. If you’re going to do both, it takes about 1 hour. Will you come back for them later?”

“No. I’ll wait.”

Soon as my words ended, he immediately got to work.

After securing the weapon tightly, he began to process the jewel.

To blacksmiths who could only level up by hammering, they put all their points into strength.

Because you’ll need to be able to wield all the weapons in the world in order to make them.

Hearing the hammering, I thought about the grandpa I met while I was at Noblesse.

Another member of Noblesse.

Honestly I hoped that Sangmin and his friends, as well as the grandpa would not be my enemies.

Like Jong Ho, I got to know them after being Awakened.

To point my sword at them, I couldn’t help but be sad about it.

While I was thinking, the owner spoke.

“Did you get them from the level 18 dungeon?”

“Yes. That’s right.”

“For someone so young, that’s amazing.”

Hearing his words, I couldn’t help but smile coolly.

“The work is done. Would you like to check?”

The sword I received from the blacksmith had red light flowing from the handle.

The yellow moonlight that covered the sword, and the red light that appeared as though trying to decorate that light.

I grabbed both Banwol Jincheon.

The strengths I gained from the jewels should be minor, but the power felt different than before.

“Thank you.”

“No need to. Please come often. It brings great joy to blacksmiths who can work on amazing weapons like that.”

Preparing everything I could, I went back home.

I saw mother who was studying Korean in the living room.

The danger I faced now. I could not let it also affect my mother.

A quick decision. It’s a plan that’s only a week old, but I needed to proceed without any hesitation.

At least for tomorrow during the fight, I wanted her to be in a safe place.

Despite being a safehouse, if they charge in relentlessly, it wouldn’t be safe for long.

After a brief moment of thinking...

“Back, son?”

“Oh! Mrs. Professor hard at studying?”

“Don’t tease me! There’s nothing incorrect an adult would say. There’s always a time for everything, so trying late isn’t working out very well.”

“Eh. If it’s you, you’re still young.”

“Fine. Did you eat?”

“Yes. I ate with Jong Ho-hyung.”

“Ah. I decided to meet with Jong Ho tomorrow. You already heard, right?”

“Yes, I’m aware.”

I asked Jong Ho to take mother to a safe location.

A place with as many government members as possible.

Jong Ho probably thought of a place already.

Then. The news on TV that I wasn’t paying attention sudden caught my eye.

-MBM news.

Recently, there has been news that attacks from the Awakened on regular personnel have been increased.

The government is trying to find a solution.

They’re trying to find a solution by the unawakened people’s representative and Awakened Association’s representative to meet.

Let’s find out about the details. Kim Sang Hwan reporting.

-Yes. This is Kim Sang Hwan.

I’m at Seoul, Korean Awakened Association headquarters.

Preparations are underway for tomorrow’s meeting.

As you can see, security is incredibly tight.

Especially due the fact that the discussion will be from 17:00 to

21:00 and citizens will be able to participate.

And the highest rankers from each class in the nation will be participating as well.....

‘That’s it.’

No matter how insane you are, that place would be impossible to attack.

I’ll have to send this information to Jong Ho as soon as possible.

“Mom, I’ll be going in first.”

“You should wash your feet at least!”

“Nope! Your son’s feet isn’t smelly at all!”

“Ha... I bought some grapes so if feel hungry, just let me know.”

“Alright.”

Why would feet smell matter when there is such an important situation to take care of.

It’s okay not to wash for one day. Because this will affect me for the rest of my life.

Returning to my room, I immediately called Jong Ho.

After a few rings, he received it.

-Oh. Min-Cheol.

“Yes. Hyung. Where were you planning to bring my mother to tomorrow?”

-As you asked, a place that’s safe and with a lot of people.

“I saw the news just now. I found the safest place in the world, you know?”

-Are you talking about the headquarters that the meeting will take place?

“Yes! That’s right.”

-I'm going to bring her over there tomorrow. Since it is a public meeting, you'd have to reserve in advance. I already did though.

"What.... You did?"

-Yeah. No need to worry. Ah. And I got the heli-cameramen that you've requested.

"Really, thank you so much, hyung."

-Don't stick too much. Tomorrow is an important day. I'm sorry hyung can't be a bigger help to you.

"Don't say that."

-Yeah. Rest and I'll see you tomorrow.

"Yes hyung."

A man who sees much further than I do.

I was sincerely happy to have someone this reliable by my side.

Now I don't have to keep worrying about my mother's safety.

I can now focus on the battle tomorrow.

All attacks and defensive skills ready.

Other than Meteor Call and Iceberg, all skills are at level 100.

Noblesse members ranging from level 100 to 200.

Even if they came in droves, I was confident that I wouldn't be pushed back.

Early morning.

Despite not setting my alarm, I woke up to the same time I usually go out to hunt.

From the kitchen, I heard mother cooking.

Inside my room drifted a scent of delicious foods.

For this peace, I'm struggling to grow in a do or die situation.

Jong Ho planned to come around noon.

After eating, they planned to go to where the news covered last night.

After breakfast, I did maintenance on my equipment.

Although I call it maintenance, but really it was just equipping and checking my status.

In each hand I held Banwol Jincheon.

Louver's Ring and Bracelet on my left hand.

And the Titan Boots by the entrance.

Things that'll bring my abilities to the next level.

They were irreplaceable items.

Jong Ho eventually arrived.

"Madam, how have you been?"

"Aha. Young Jong Ho came?"

"Would you like to go on a date after lunch? I heard you enjoy literature, and there is a place that would be quite a sight to visit."

"Oh? Is that so? Min-Cheol can come along too."

"No, I have something to take care of."

"Really? That's too bad. What concert?"

"Not a concert. Your son is an Awakened, right? There's a nice lecture being held that would be good to hear, so I'd like to take you there."

"Jong Ho, you're so caring. If I was 10 years younger, I'd fall for you."

"Your compliments are too much! Haha."

With that relaxing atmosphere, Jong Ho and mother left the house.

After confirming their vehicle leaving, I prepared to leave.

Here was the front of the Noblesse guild building.

I was here to smash both the stable and the predators.

“This is real war, Park Hyun.”

Chapter 42 - Smash, Charge (5)

In front of the Noblesse guild building, south sector.

I was making final preparations.

Best case scenario, all the combat will occur within the building.

If that occurs, exposure of my abilities will be minimized.

But I do not know what will happen.

Just in case, the helicameras that I've prepared in advance were covering the areas near the building.

And I had just confirmed that the camera build into the glasses were properly connected with my smart phone.

I wish there was technology that would allow a live feed, but that level of technology didn't exist.

After checking over all my equipment, I headed through the entrance.

But I had already quit the guild.

It only made sense that I did not possess a guild member card that was needed to enter.

The Awakened who were guarding the entrance stopped me.

They guarded the entrance as if they were high ranking soldiers on patrol.

Seems that the guard duty rotated between members.

One of the guards who stopped me spoke.

“Why did you come?”

“Here to see Park Hyun.”

Why is the younger me addressing the elder with disrespect?

Because I was already tired of all their vile manipulative ways.

No matter what the age, I had no intentions of respecting anyone within this building.

I had no plans to end up like the midget and his goons.

Why? Because two days ago, I searched for Jae Hyuk.

And I even learned an interesting bit of info.

It was that everyone within the guild were in on the scheme.

I was hoping that Sangmin and blacksmith gramps wouldn't be but...

My hopes were dashed pretty easily.

And they even planned to use my mother to have me give into their demands.

Of course he didn't give me this information easily.

I had to beat him to near death and spam heal to bring him back over and over again. Must've been a hellish time for him.

More the reason why I needed to make sure that this ends cleanly.

To make sure that those around me and I will no longer be put in harm's way.

After hearing me, he was laughing as if I was insane.

"What? What is this rude kid saying?"

"I don't like saying things twice. Listen up. Park! Hyun! I'm here to meet her, so get out of my way."

"You crazy shithead! Where do you think this is? Calling our master without a hint of respect!"

With him throwing a fit, all the guards distracted by their smartphones looked up.

With neat guild uniforms, about 10 of them appeared, their dress shoes echoing throughout the lobby.

I held a giant cello bag that contained both Banwol Jincheon.

Coupled with my simple training wear that only added onto their suspicion.

Since my apparel was lacking for visiting a place like this.

“What? What’s happening?”

“Listen to this. This bitch is calling our master’s name without any respect, and told us he’s here to meet her.”

“Guess he’s got some guts?”

“.....”

The one who was in his middle years seemed to be the eldest out of the bunch.

He didn’t come closer, but turned around on the spot.

And he dismissed me with a wave of his hand.

“What shall we do?”

“You idiot! Look at his eyes, he’s not normal. Just give him a little attention and send him off. Nowadays, there are plenty of crazies going about.”

“Yes. Understood.”

He took off his hat and bowed to the middle aged man, then spoke to me.

Seemed that the old man was the most skilled out of all these goons.

“You’re lucky! If you don’t wanna get hurt, get the fuck out!”

“Yeah. Your mother is waiting for you, kiddo.”

I heard their snickers.

I was hoping to go in quietly... Guess I have to smell the scent of blood from the start.

‘If I cause enough of a ruckus, I’m sure Park Hyun will appear on

her own.'

I casted Reflect Shield and the attack buff Protection of the Brave.

Looking at the shield and red colored buff around me, they began to group back up with annoyance.

"You little bitch!"

"You wanna go right here? I'm not letting you get away just because you're a kid!"

"Where do you think this is to ask for a fight?"

All of them began to pull out their weapons and prepared to fight.

But it looked like I didn't even need to pull out my own.

As soon as they came close...

Lightning Spray that had no cast time began to pour atop their heads.

It was different from before, since it had hit level 100.

Instead of spraying about weakly, it poured thunder upon the ground.

Out of 13, 7 of them instantly lost consciousness.

And I didn't stop there, but casted more on the guards that were still conscious.

The leftovers were foaming at the mouth or their eyes rolled up.

As their bodies exploded, blood sprayed everywhere.

And the floor was covered in their excrements.

I walked over to the middle aged man who couldn't even let out a pained groan, shuddering feebly on the ground.

"Here to meet Park Hyun. Report."

"Ugh... Gah....."

Trying to swallow the blood that kept coming back up, he used the hand held radio.

“Operations room.”

“L... Lobby...! Code red...”

“What’s happening?”

“Code red....”

I took the radio out of his grasp.

How many times do I need to say this.

“This is your last warning. I’m here to meet Park Hyun. Check using the lobby CCTV and move quickly.”

As soon as my words ended, I heard the yelling from the other side.

Seemed far away from the radio.

“Shit hit the fan! Check the lobby now! Code red!”

“What! What happened!”

“Guess they just realized. I won’t wait for long.”

The code red they were talking about, seemed it was for battle stations.

Checking the situation of the lobby, they should be swarming me.

But things went a little differently from what I expected.

The entrance that I went through, as well as all exits were being sealed.

‘Guess we won’t have a need for a director for those helicams.’

Also, the lobby that should be filled with noise had no visible movement.

My confusion only lasted a moment.

An announcement over the PA system rang throughout the building.

– To all Noblesse guild members.

Code red. Code red. Prepare for combat.

Informing once more...

‘I guess they want me to find them? Then I’ll come.’

Looks like today’s fight will end within the building.

To go to Park Hyun’s office, I rode the elevator.

While riding, I pulled out Banwol Jincheon from the cello bag.

And I casted Mana Shield as well.

They want me to come to them, not for them to come to me.

Could be preparing a trap or an ambush.

Ding. 60th floor.

The door opened, and as always, Park Hyun’s secretary in training was guarding the entrance to the office.

Also present was the sunglasses man who was the reason behind the guild wars victory.

I walked towards them.

Both black suits allowed me to pass without a word.

It wasn’t just a little suspicious.

Because I thought the two of them would rush me with swords, but instead they were guiding me in.

The door to the office opened.

Park Hyun greeted me as if she had been waiting, coming all the way to the middle of the conference table.

“Mr. Min-cheol, I’m really glad to see you again.”

“.....”

“They should be aware of who they’re dealing with before blocking the way. Useless expendable grunts, right? I’ll apologize for what happened at the lobby. Would you like some tea?”

Listen to her crazy talk.

Looking at the swords in my hands, yet asking if I’d like tea without blinking an eye.

Maybe it’s not that strange for Awakened to carry around weapons.

But she was treating her guild members that gave their lives at the entrance like trash.

And all entrances as well as exits were blocked off.

I was sure that she was just trying to see how much I’ve caught on.

“Now. Why the sudden visit?”

“You sent a pretty amusing gift. Just wanted to thank you for it.”

“What do you mean?”

“Was there an assassin of that caliber in the guild?”

Her poker face didn’t last long.

Hearing my words, Park Hyun went stiff as a board, her face cold like ice.

An expression that showed she never expected me to catch on.

She never had shown her true emotions once in front of me.

She continued while holding the cup of coffee with both hands.

“You knew, yet you came anyways?”

“.....”

“Then this should be an easy talk. What will you choose?”

“Choose?”

“Yes. Are you going to join me. Or are you going to turn away?”

The coffee cup she was holding was broken to the point where it was hard to recognize what it was anymore.

“Are you seriously asking me that? Contact the funeral services first. Tell them there’s going to be a massive influx of clients. Today, you and all your goons will die by my hands.”

“Pfft! Aren’t you being arrogant just because of your abilities? Coming into my guild on your own and killing all the guild members by yourself?”

Park Hyun hit the table while laughing uncontrollably.

As I predicted, she had an idea of what my ability is.

But looking at her right now, it seems she didn’t realize that my mana is infinite.

Guess she simply thought my mana regen rate is high.

“Even joking has a limit too, you know. Acting all high and mighty just because of a high mana regen rate.”

“Is that how it looks to you?”

“And the two swords you have. They’re both Banwol Jincheon’s. You’re foolishly trying to raise your strength stat still... You can’t even use your abilities to its potential, just like a child.”

“Are you done talking?”

Park Hyun turned towards to the apprentice secretaries and nodded.

Anyone could tell it was a signal to attack.

The man with the sunglasses pulled out his sword.

The two others next him pulled their swords out as well.

For hunting, one hunts. For fighting, one fights.

All warrior classes had superior stats compared to other classes.

That's why all her guards are warriors.

Ignoring the approaching warriors, I spoke to Park Hyun.

"Isn't it a bit too crowded here? Doesn't look like all your goons are here. It'll take long at this rate. Group them up to one location. I'll send all that beautiful comradery off at once."

"Pfft. It won't be too bad to execute you in public. It'll even serve as a reminder to those who are easily swayed."

"Bring all of them in, even those outside. If these guys go to the afterworld first, the guys outside would feel lonely, right?"

"Ha.... Where is this confidence coming from."

Park Hyun put a hand on her forehead, treating me as nonsensical.

"Not sure if it is more fortunate or unfortunate for you, but there will be a guild war at 8. You will die a dog's death in front of everyone."

At Park Hyun's words, all three apprentice secretaries put away their swords.

Immediately, one of them contacted someone with haste.

Her expression changed back into that carefree look.

I wonder how much time has passed.

Then all speakers on the ceilings spread an announcement.

-Ahem! Ahem! Informing all Noblesse guild members.

Code red summons! Form up on floor 12 in combat readiness.

Announcing once more. All forces, converge on the 12th floor.

'All right. I can take care of this more cleanly than I thought.'

While listening to the broadcast, Park Hyun looked at her watch and spoke.

And she spoke with her usual smile.

“It’s 6:40 right now. Let’s go in about 5 min. By then, everyone should be there.”

“5 min left. You should be reflecting with what time you have left. The result would be the same of course.”

Chapter 43 - Smash, Charge (6)

5 minutes went by slowly.

Park Hyun stood up from her set, and passed by my shoulder.

All three trainee secretaries followed her swiftly.

In the elevator, one of the secretaries pressed the button for the 12th underground floor.

Behind them stood Park Hyun and I.

Park Hyun spoke without a hint of emotion on her face.

“How about changing your mind now? Too much of waste for you to die now.”

“Didn’t I say before? Start reflecting on your actions. Well, even if you have a change of heart now, nothing would change.”

“Your foolishness is hastening your death.”

“Say that in hell, with all your goons next to you.”

“Even to the end... you do not take the opportunity give to you.”

“Let me ask one thing.”

“Hm?”

“What were you trying to use me for?”

“Pfft. By the way, those glasses really suit you.”

Park Hyun was probably laughing at my question by suggesting that she already knew about the camera build into the glasses.

It didn’t matter though.

Whatever her goal was, the fact that she will die won’t change.

“Your ability to notice is something else.”

“But how unfortunate. The 12th floor we’re going to, no signal will go through. If we give the video from the lobby to the

association, I can easily explain why you died within this building. Then I just have to get rid of that camera and it'll end cleanly. Right?"

There was not a single incorrect word coming from the smiling woman.

If it went the way Park Hyun wanted, tomorrow's papers will have the front page as this.

A man who forced his way into a guild located in the southern sector.

To gain entry, he had murdered 13 guards.

In an attempt to stop the man, all the guild members came.

While trying to put a stop to the man, he continued to struggle and perished doing so.

Something like that?

"A pretty good scenario."

"Will it only be a scenario? I'll be filming soon, so please look forward to it."

"I think you'll fit the main role a lot better, Park Hyun?"

"I hope you keep up that confidence till the end. Heh."

*

Ding. Underground, 12th floor.

At the 12th underground floor, the glasses became filled with black and white static, along with the sound of buzzing.

Guess what Park Hyun said in the elevator wasn't a lie.

Most likely the camera built into the glasses is not functioning anymore.

Well it doesn't matter now.

Thanks to Park Hyun's overconfidence of a 100% victory.

I was now able to annihilate them without anyone noticing.

The underground area was very similar to somewhere I've seen before.

It was an area that exists in every association building, a perfect replica of the arena for guild battles.

The square ceiling. The floor, walls, and the ceiling were made of the same materials.

If there is one thing that's different, there was spectator seating.

I wasn't sure if it is illegal to have a place like this within the guild.

Could be a place to practice for guild battles.

I spent a brief moment looking about.

A leader-like beautiful elder ran up to Park Hyun.

"Noblesse guild 532 present, none absent! That is all."

Other than the secretaries, I could tell that the elder was the general for the Awakened gathered here.

Then.

'Oho? Look at this?'

There were far less people than what I saw at the guild war before.

I didn't know the total number, but I was sure that it shrank.

Following the elder who finished the report, Park Hyun stood the center of the guild members.

They were armed alike. In the center was Park Hyun.

A lady who had 500 guild members following her.

"After seeing all this, do you still think you can get out of here alive?"

"What do you think?"

“Impossible. There won’t be a corpse left to find.”

“Since we’re on the topic of corpses, if it wasn’t for all of you planning to use my mother, I was at least planning to let your corpses be returned to your respective families. But you already crossed a river you shouldn’t have.”

Hearing my words, Park Hyun instantly turned to stare at Sangmin and Jae Hyuk expressionlessly.

Other than those two, no one else would reveal that information to me.

Gaining back her facial expressions again, she spoke.

“You’re going to die anyways. After that, your precious mother’s life is not of any importance. She’s not needed. Isn’t that a relief?”

“Funny. But looks like the number of your members dropped? Guess you’re working them real hard?”

“Pfft. 21! People who made a stupid decision like you. You’ll be joining them soon.”

“Even with that face, you talk like a scum really well. So scary. Let’s fight already and get this over with.”

Soon as my words finished, magic flew from all directions.

The group had spread out in pairs of 40 to 50 like the time in the guild battles.

Park Hyun retreated to the rear.

By her side, 40 or so members including the secretaries stood to guard her.

I was positive that was the elite squadron.

Over 500 members had begun their attack simultaneously.

From one side, high class magic was being cast.

While keeping distance, all classes poured their ranged attacks relentlessly.

To attacks like this, using Frozen Shield or Reflect Shield was a bit too dangerous.

Even if it took some time, it would be best to continue keeping up the Mana Shield I casted before.

As if getting rid of weeds, I felt the battle would go a lot smoother if the weaker ones were removed first I raised my hand and received their spells.

In a split second, Louver's Ring absorbed massive amounts of mana and sent them to the bracelet.

The bracelet shone with bright radiance.

The next skill would be an empowered skill more than twice as strong as the regular cast.

Since I was using Mana Shield, I could only cast a spell with one hand.

That's why I needed to choose an effective spell.

First I used the monster in a pocket! Devil Avatar.

Even now, I was not used to the Howling they used every time I summoned them.

Blue, Yellow, and Red.

Frost, lightning, and fire aspects were summoned, one of each.

I think my luck is pretty good.

There probably are members who have high resistance to one type of element via passive skillbooks.

Thanks to Louver's Bracelet, the summoned had a far larger body than what they usually had.

The summoned avatars began to blast spells without remorse.

They attacked anything I determined them to be enemies.

That would be all life forms in front of me.

Awakened with low resistances due to being low level began to fall one by one.

Jae Hyuk and Sangmin were included in this.

Didn't really care for Jae Hyuk, but I did have a soft spot for Sangmin.

However. Now knowing everything, I did not need emotions like that for this.

“AHHH!”

“H...HEAL! I NEED HEALING!”

The battle ground the Devil Avatars went through, only annihilation stood in their wake.

Charred black, bodies that were shattered to pieces. There were bodies covered in blood, barely still alive.

The avatars didn't hesitate for a second, continuing to attack.

To the injured, healers began to cast healing spells from afar.

The battlefield was enveloped in chaos swiftly.

The healers couldn't focus because the screams were mixed with the sound of battle.

They couldn't leave formation and go around healing.

To the healers, I casted Hold and Bind.

“No need for doctors!”

There was a reason why I didn't use an attack skill on them directly.

Healers. A class that raised their mana stats primarily.

If they casted 'Flash' that all classes can use to try escaping...

It would get annoying.

To end it quickly, they needed to be targeted first.

Hold and Bind were no longer single target skills, but had become AoE due to being leveled up to 100.

Other than a few high level healers, all were frozen in place.

A giant stone golem's hand rose from the ground and grabbed their feet.

A net shaped Hold tied them up in place.

They couldn't move a muscle. I used Flash to approach them instantly.

To the approaching reaper, instead of running, they couldn't even move gasp in horror as they were stuck in place.

To the grouped bunch, I caste Fire Shock.

'Awakened Fire Shock' struck with bursts of flame.

I didn't even look behind me.

There was no reason to look at the pathetic deaths of those who couldn't even move or scream as they died.

After 10 seconds of its duration, I couldn't even find a single trace of them.

It was possible because the skill level was at 134.

Park Hyun, who was far away, wasn't panicking a little bit.

If her thoughts of me having 'high mana regen rate' was correct, my mana shield should've been broken already.

But unlike her expectations, I was absorbing all the magic being thrown from all directions without any issues.

Moving in front of those she was being guarded by, she began taking command.

"A ranking healers! Retreat back to your assigned areas!"

With one word from her, those who had ignored both Bind and Hold with ease were absorbed into their respective groups.

The healers stood in the center of their formations.

“Cast Mass Heal! Tanks, bards. Cast defensive skills! All magicians, cast your highest ranking spells!”

Mass Heal was a skill that allowed healing on the injured within a certain radius.

The mana cost was equivalent to the amount healed, so it was a heavy costing skill that only healers could use.

I didn't have enough time to take out these pinheads one by one.

I had to take them all out and get out quickly.

I was against time from the start.

The reason was that Noblesse had a guild battle to attend to in 40 min.

If they didn't attend, the association will contact the guild.

Because to not attend was against the agreement made with the opposing guild and with the association.

The punishment depended on the times they didn't attend.

There were cases of all guild members not being able to enter dungeons, or even losing their Awakened licenses.

And the entire guild is currently at a location where signal doesn't work.

The association hunters that will come looking for the guild that's missing will be suspicious of the building that is sealed shut.

And if they see the horrible state of the inside?

I was going to get blamed for everything that happened, since I didn't have a single bit of alibi.

With Iceberg and Meteor Call were at level 40, the duration had been lowered to 4 minutes.

But to hit all those who have spread out, the affected area wasn't

big enough.

I was casting Gravity Laser and giving them continuous damage.

However it wasn't doing much, as they had already formed up ranks.

Even if the skill was Awakened, it couldn't go through all the magicians' shields and the tanks' defensive skills.

"Damn. I don't have time for this."

Finishing my thoughts, I stopped casting Mana Shield.

The shield stopped covering my body.

Immediately, I casted Reflect Shield, Frozen Shield, and Spirit Armor.

At the lowest, they were level 100 spells. It wouldn't break against attacks like these.

I casted Flash to get between the two formed ranks.

One on each of my sides.

Around 100 people were clumped together.

Eyes of the Storm. And Typhoon Hole!

Above both groups, a massive whirlwind formed.

"Let's see how long you last."

Both skills spun them at an incredible rate.

Spinning at massive speeds, it already started to pull in everything.

Those who had already spent their mana were swept off and grinded to a pulp.

No matter how much defensive skill they use, they won't last long.

They were receiving a massive amount of damage from the synergy between the two skills.

All perished within 3 minutes.

The grey tornado had become red with blood, and shredded bits of meat flew about everywhere.

The rain of blood colored my next target in red.

Then.

“Ug...Ugh!”

Chapter 44 - Smash, Charge (7)

“Kuh! Ugh!”

A single instant attack towards me.

All 3 level 100 shields shattered pathetically.

I had even Awakened the Reflect Shield.

An amount of damage I never seen or even heard of.

At my stomach, two holes each the size of my fists appeared.

Like an open facet, blood poured out.

My organs began to spill out one by one.

‘Ma... Mana Shield!’

I fell on my knees.

Both Banwol Jincheon had left my hands a long time ago.

This kind of a lethal attack, I have not received since the Kelvacore.

With all my strength, I covered the whole in my stomach.

Despite that, blood continued to pour out without any signs of slowing down.

Who did it. A person who’d be able to deal such an insane amount of damage with precision.

Regaining my composure, I casted heal with the hand that was covering the wound.

With the other hand that was holding onto the ground, I focused to make sure I continued casting Mana Shield.

The 200 or so left, as if waiting for this final chance, was firing off all their highest ranking magic and physical attacks on me.

If I did not level up my heal to 100, I would not be able to get out of this dire situation.

The punctured stomach began to heal.

My body began to regain the warmth lost from all the blood loss, as well as the color that was turning pale beforehand.

It was quite the dire situation.

Everything almost ended in one attack.

“Ha.. Ha... That was dangerous.”

It was a crucial mistake to cancel my Mana Shield due to time constraints.

My wound healed perfectly.

Now that it came down to this, I could not abandon the Mana Shield.

Guess I have to use one hand to defend and the other to attack.

My highest damage skills Meteor and Iceberg both had a cast time of 4 minutes.

And they also had the cooldown of 4 minutes.

Instead of those 2 skills, I had to use the lower cooldown Fire Shock to cause as much as damage as possible.

Each of my hands held Banwol Jincheon once more, and I glared at them with fury.

Watching me regain my composure, their faces filled with fear.

Some of them even began to back away.

It's to be expected though, since there was someone using skills from all classes without a care in front of them.

With fearful looks, they looked to one another.

Those who were backing away dashed towards the exit.

However, it was only for a moment.

Those who ran towards the exit, their heads were chopped off by the secretary with the sunglasses before they could even get near

it.

Cleaning the blood off the blade, the secretary said to the shaking crowd.

“Fight. Master did not give the order to retreat.”

The body that had its head chopped off was still standing.

Like a fountain, blood began to spray from the neck.

Those around the headless man could do nothing but cry.

The secretary pointed his sword once more at the crowd.

Only now did they seem to have snapped out of fear.

I decided to take care of the extras after I take care of Park Hyun and her guards.

I couldn't continue to waste time.

I casted 'Brave's Protection', its red hue enveloping me.

Increasing my attack power, I swiftly dashed to Park Hyun's location.

30 minutes left!

Due to the long fight, seems they're running out of mana.

They did pour all their skills at me.

Definitely low on mana.

All warriors stopped their ranged attacks and began to close in for close quarter combat.

They were in my way to Park Hyun.

“Out of my way!”

Extras that aren't even being protected by the healers.

One Fire Shock was enough.

“A-.....”

The Awakeneds that tried to Cut, Heavy Slash, and use such skills became ash.

Despite burning them to ashes, the flames still burned fiercely.

I ran through them, spreading fire.

At my 1700 strength stat slashing, those resisting were hacked apart.

Blue, the devil avatar arrived near Park Hyun.

It was the only one still alive.

It raised a giant knife that looked like a table knife to the skies.

On the blade, there were bloody remains of its victims.

The blood of the Awakened that were chopped apart without remorse were frozen into icicles from the frost aura.

With its roar, countless icicles began to fall from the sword.

However, Park Hyun and her guards did not react.

The avatar's skill that rained icicles were about to swallow them.

It was then.

“Block it, Shetrick.”

Park Hyun opened her mouth.

The elderly lady standing within the group.

The one who had reported the total count of the assembled to Park Hyun.

Staring at me directly as I charged at her, she raised her hand and released a massive flame tornado.

The fierce ice attack disappeared without a trace.

Seemed to be a magician class.

‘Definitely someone to worry about.’

Her focus changed from me to the avatar.

Since the skill became useless, it swung its sword.

Suddenly, the staff that the elder was holding onto became huge.

It turned into a sword made of magma, pulsing molten rock as if alive.

Arriving to the giant avatar's head, she precisely struck without any wasteful movement. With that, the avatar was destroyed instantly.

I had used Louver's Bracelet to cast Devil Avatar.

But she was skilled enough to take that out in one hit.

Blue did its job.

He distracted them and bought me time.

I could've gotten to them faster using Teleport, but there is a reason why I ran at them.

It was because I was in the middle of casting Meteor Call.

The casting finished, and a level 40 Meteor was falling atop of them.

All tanks came together.

No matter what kind of a tank you are, it wouldn't be enough to block an attack like this.

The armor they wore shattered apart into dust.

But guess they used all the mana they had left to use defensive skills.

There were still 3 secretaries, Shetrick, and Park Hyun herself still standing behind them.

I took another step towards them.

'Gravity Laser.'

They had spent all their mana, and could do nothing as the laser enveloped their forms.

Max range. Area of effect. There was no way the extras could live.

Now, 5 were left.

The final bosses.

I stood before them.

‘Iceberg.’

An icy aura began to form at the tip of my sword.

It took 4 minutes to cast.

Putting the sword on my shoulders, I asked.

“Do you still think I can’t escape alive?”

“... You arrogant little shit.”

Holding onto her wand with enough force to cause cracks, she grinded her teeth.

There was only one way out of this battlefield.

And it was behind me.

“You said you’ll be going to the guild battle soon? Guess you don’t have anyone to bring anymore. Maybe you could put some of the bloody chunks of flesh back together.”

“I’ll rip your tongue out!”

“Ah. Let me ask. The attack that broke all my shields. Who did it?”

“.....”

“Looks like it’s not the four left here. Must be the assassin who tried using the Dagger Throw?”

“Kill!”

Obedying her command, the three secretaries pulled their swords out and charged.

They moved as one, striking at me in one fluid movement.

Their attacks had no chance to work on me.

The bloody sword was blocked by the Mana Shield, shaking in its tracks.

Pulling back their swords, they fixed their stance and stuck right by me.

Looking at their attack with leisure, I focused only on casting Iceberg.

With incredible speed they slashed.

Trying to cut down my shield with Whirlwind?

“You think you can cut me? Try using a blender. You got 2 minutes until you get sent to the afterlife.”

“KWAHHH!”

The sunglasses man casted Piercing Sword like a madman.

Countless swords came towards me.

But they didn't move as he intended.

It was a skill that caused damage by going through the target repeatedly.

But the swords that were blocked by the shields fell to the floor weakly.

The swords continued to pour, but the result was the same.

“1 minute.”

It was then.

“GAH! YOU CRAZY LITTLE SHIT!”

I was casting Mana Shield without a doubt.

But how could this be?

My wounds were reopening.

This wasn't an attack skill that was beyond ranking.

And there was nobody nearby who had that capability.

Even if there was, this wasn't an injury from an attack.

‘Perhaps.’

That's it. It was Park Hyun's 'Status Negation.'

The skill was used to return the target back to its healthy status before receiving an injury.

However, this bitch had used it to return me back to the state of being injured.

Since it was a healing type of spell, Mana Shield did not recognize it as an attack and could not block the skill.

The secretary's Piercing Sword targeted my whole body once more.

If I can just focus, I can make it.

Seems his mana also ran out.

Piercing Sword costed 10% of your max mana afterall.

It also looked like the Whirlwind used before took a lot as well.

“ORAAAA!”

Yelling out what was a mix of screaming and yelling, I finished casting Iceberg.

Immediately I poured healing on myself.

With its massive range, even Shetrick got caught up despite being positioned far back.

Almost like doing puzzles or a rubix cube, the inside of the iceberg shifted.

With it splitting the targets apart and the massive temperature drop at an incredible rate, Iceberg delivered a massive amount of damage.

Shetrick was holding on using her Mana Shield.

However, there was no way she had the mana capacity to receive a level 40 Iceberg.

Other than Park Hyun, the targets were shattered apart to the point where it was hard to recognize their forms.

I was too busy healing to watch them die though.

“Making a hole in my stomach twice. Damn! I won’t let you die so easily. Park Hyun!”

“M...monster! You monster!”

Park Hyun started to back away, trembling like a leaf.

Even if she was a murderer, she was at her own execution.

If someone saw the noose that would hang them, they would probably have this expression.

She too was a person.

I healed enough to be able to move around again.

One of the 4 that was trapped in the Iceberg, I could see a piece containing a wrist.

The wristwatch read 7:45 pm.

“There’s still 15 minutes left!”

Even I’d admit that only a devil would say those words.

If you asked how far can humanity’s cruelty go...

The answer could be the mass murder I committed today.

“For you bitch, this is only the beginning!”

Chapter 45 - Smash, Charge (8)

“Stay away! You can’t!”

“Talk. I won’t ask twice.”

Covered in blood, I was nearing her.

Literally a bloodbath.

She saw how her subordinates died in front of her.

There was fear in her eyes, fear of someone with absolute power.

“L... Let me live.”

“Who knows about me?”

“I’m just a low end nobody. I’ve never reported to the higher ups directly.”

“You don’t know?”

“Yes. I only work with the money and manpower provided. So please let me live.”

“I don’t think those words are fitting for someone who treats people’s lives like flies.”

“.....”

“Now the little shit that put a dagger in me. The one who left a hole in my stomach. Where is he? If he’s that skilled, there is no way he’d get wiped out with the trash mobs like these. He’s probably in here. Where exactly, though?”

“.....”

To my question, Park Hyun answered with silence.

Even at the face of death, huh. I respected her for that.

However.

‘Piercing Sword.’

The skill that attacked at my will flew towards her.

“I said I wouldn’t ask twice you know?”

“AHHH! JIN!”

In a span of a few seconds, her arms and legs had become unrecognizable, cut apart like tattered leather.

I had no plans of doing things slowly today.

Park Hyun tried to heal herself with what little mana she had left.

Her eyes were of someone at the edge of losing their sanity.

Her body trembled as I healed her.

Because I had a lot more questions to ask.

“Jin? The shit’s name is Jin? You reported to Jin about me. Right?”

“C... Correct.....”

“And Jin would’ve reported to the higher ups.”

“.....”

“Why did you want to bring me in?”

“It was to make the world as he willed it. For a new utopia.”

“Wanting my power. Was that all?”

“.....”

“Where should I rip you apart this time? I’ll ask for the last time. What are you up to?”

“P.. Project.... Underground f-”

It was at that moment.

Her upper body exploded.

Blown apart as if she swallowed a bomb.

Definitely the work of this ‘Jin’.

It was at the moment she was about to reveal important information.

To stop her from talking, he had killed Park Hyun.

From the pool of blood on the ground, a man's form appeared.

A shadow.

Appearing like smoke, he looked at the remains of Park Hyun's lower body and spoke.

"Stupid bitch. Can't do anything right."

"Are you the one called Jin?"

A man whose face was covered by a black mask.

A red aura covered his body.

Wearing nothing but black clothing, he was like a shadow.

"You're more amazing than I thought, brat. You have powers beyond my expectations."

"Don't talk bullshit and answer me. Are you Jin?"

"Yes."

"Then listen up. I don't want to know who you reported to, and or what they're planning to do. And I don't care what you are trying to do either. But know this. If you get in my way, you won't be able to avoid a dog's death. Understand?"

"Ku. Funny."

"You think I'm joking?"

Countless swords flew out.

With pinpoint accuracy, they all pierced his body.

But he didn't respond or move in the slightest.

Banwol Jincheon had surely went through all over his body.

However not a single drop of blood spilled.

Almost like attacking smoke without form, only black haze rose.

After countless attacks, his laughter echoed.

“Kuhahahahahaha.”

Towards the sound of his laughter, I turned my head.

His form had multiplied to nearly a hundred and was filling up my view.

Both Piercing Sword and Gravity Laser could not hit him.

He wasn't just your average trash mob.

An attack that went through 3 of my level 100 shields in one go.

And even after going through them all, still causing me a lethal injury.

I knew he used assassination attacks, but he still went past my expectations.

I stopped flailing about with my skills.

Instantly, he appeared before me and spoke.

“Endless mana. With such powers, why do you not dream bigger.”

“Big dreams? Are you telling me to conquer the world?”

“With such potential you provide... With them, it wouldn't be impossible.”

“That kind of a childish dream. You can dream all you want, just don't mess with me or those around me.”

“That's all, you say.”

“Answer me.”

“Pft. I don't like complex plans that people like Park Hyun comes up with too. But you seem to have lots of uses. We'll meet again, brat.”

“The moment I see you, you're dead.”

I was in the middle of casting Iceberg, but Jin had already left a sarcastic smile and faded into the shadows.

The 12th underground floor.

The battleground was filled with weapons without owners and the stench of blood.

I used Eye of the Storm to gather what was left and used Fire Shock.

I couldn't leave any evidence.

All the gear they left behind. I was sure there were some that would fetch incredible prices.

But I didn't want to mess with any of them.

I hurried to the elevator.

I had to go to the central command center to get rid of all the evidence I was here.

But before that I had to go somewhere.

The words she spoke before dying, I had become curious about them.

Just what were they up to.

The elevator had an underground floor up to the 14th.

13th and 14th. There were some time left to look around.

-Ding. 13th underground floor.

*

“What? There's nothing here. Since she knew she was going to die anyways, did she trick me?”

On the 13th and 14th floor, there was nothing left.

Both floors were completely empty.

All I could see were the building's foundations and metal meshings.

I couldn't help but feel that something was off.

I went back onto the elevator and ripped apart the panel for the buttons.

There was a small button below the 14th floor's button.

"Of course."

-Ding. 15th underground floor.

"What the... why?"

The lowest floor for the building, the 15th underground floor.

When the elevator's door opened, I couldn't help but be surprised.

There was a portal.

It was a portal that once explodes, would pour out monsters.

A level 25 portal at that.

Portals appear at random.

There is a possibility that this portal naturally formed at the underground floor of this building.

But it also could mean that they knew about the existence of this portal and made it Noblesse's headquarters.

The latter seemed more convincing.

My focus stayed on the portal for short moment.

I looked around as well.

There was a machine I've never seen before connected to the top of the portal.

And against the walls were people who seemed to be asleep inside capsules.

It wasn't just one or two, but hundreds.

And all the capsules were connected to the machine atop the

portal.

Could be that the machine is extracting something from all these people to the portal.

Or possibly that it is extracting something from the portal and injecting it into all these people.

“What the hell is all this?”

After thinking briefly, I checked the time on the phone that started to work once more.

For the past 2 hours, there were many missed calls from Jong Ho.

Must’ve been ringing since I’ve been on floor 12 where all signal is blocked.

I couldn’t spend any more time here.

I took a video footage of the entire 15th floor with my smartphone.

Seemed that they were up to something incredibly malicious.

I headed for the central command center afterwards.

All the CCTV footage collected throughout the building comes in here.

If I destroyed this place, there shouldn’t be any records of me left.

Since it wasn’t a place built to withstand any impact, I used my weakest skill Lightning Spray.

As the lightning began to take shape, the phone rang.

Jong Ho called.

“Yes. Hyung.”

“HEY! Why won’t you pick up!”

“Since I’m underground, I guess there was no signal.”

“You okay? Where are you right now?”

“I’m about to leave. Where are you? How about mom?”

“We’re still at the debate. No matter who comes in, it’s safe. I kept calling you but you didn’t pick up. I thought I was going to die from worrying. Seriously.”

“That’s good. I’m fine. I’ll finish up and leave.”

“Alright. You’re okay for sure, right? After you leave, call me. Promise you will.”

“Yes. I understand. Don’t worry.”

*

I went to the roof of the building.

All exits were still blocked off.

If I forced my way out, I would be looked upon with suspicion.

The buildings nearby were about 30 to 40 km away.

I took the change of clothes from the cello bag I brought and put the Banwol Jincheons in.

After that, I leapt over to the other building.

With the amount of strength points I had, the distance wasn’t an issue.

I went through the other building to get to the ground floor.

It’s over. Is it really over though?

Jin’s ‘for now’ wasn’t really letting me relax.

None of my attacks had worked.

But from what he said, there were superiors above him he reported to.

Even more monstrous than him.

I decided to stop thinking about the complex details.

I caught a taxi quickly.

From the window, I could see there was work occurring to open the Noblesse's entrance.

"Driver. Take me to the Mapogu association headquarters."

"Yes. To association headquarters."

*

As soon as Min-Cheol left the Noblesse's building...

Jin acted swiftly.

It was to destroy the project room in the underground floor.

It was a situation where their identities could've been revealed.

He even got rid of all Min-Cheol's tracks completely – the hand held radio at the entrance, all the way to his bloody footprints.

After finishing up, he arrived at base.

"Jin. Situation?"

"Noblesse guild annihilated. Including Park Hyun."

"That stupid bitch finally did it. The project?"

"Other than the portal itself, all evidence has been erased."

"They'd only become suspicious towards Noblesse and Park Hyun."

"That's correct."

"Let's not dwell on it. Only a small river was flowing to the sea was blocked. You sure it was just him doing this alone?"

"Yes. I'm sure he has infinite mana. Using all classes' magic infinitely."

"So our guess was correct. What is his combat capabilities?"

"As you can see, he had enough to slaughter a guild of over 500. But since he wasn't able to attack me, he is an amateur in terms of understanding and controlling skills."

“I see. Jin. Please take care of this. I can’t rely on low idiotic peasants no longer.”

“Understood. I’ll look over him for the time being.”

“For our plan, he is indispensable.”

“Yes.”

Jin left the meeting room afterwards.

Behind the darkness the blinds provided, a man intertwined his hands and spoke to himself.

“So I have to raise a tiger cub... Pfft. This will be interesting.”

Chapter 46 - The Firing From The Readied Marksman Begins

“Hello?”

“Hey Min-Cheol. Where are you?”

“In front of the association building. When do you think you’ll finish?”

“This stuff isn’t important to listen to. I’ll be escorting your mother outside in 10 minutes.”

“Ok. I’ll be in front of the subway. Exit 3.”

Due to the heavy amount of security around the association building, I decided to wait by the subway.

I had wiped all the blood off me, as well as getting a change of clothes.

But I could not hide the scent of blood that permeated my skin.

I looked around my surroundings briefly.

Soon, I saw my mother and Jong Ho exiting.

“Oh my. Why are you so smelly.”

“I went hunting. How was the debate?”

“Don’t even ask. You can’t go around hitting people, okay? Especially beating the weak to death, to the point where you can’t even recognize their corpses. I don’t know where the world is headed towards.”

At my mother’s words, my heart became heavy.

Didn’t I just kill over 500 members of the guild?

But I do not regret today’s events in the slightest.

I had to get tougher, both physically and mentally.

To protect what is mine, I could take on more.

“Hey. What do you think I think of you. Mom already knows. You won’t hurt anyone first.”

“You’re wrong. Even if a regular person attacks first, you have to solve it with words.”

“Ok! I got it, I got it. Guess you had quite the fun, since you’re still talking. Let’s go home already. I’m hungry.”

*

After coming back home and finishing the meal, I talked to Jong Ho about Jin.

I needed a plan to deal with him.

He already fully understood my abilities.

But I had no information regarding his abilities or the superiors above him.

And I can handle their attacks to some degree.

But I could not guarantee the safety of my mother when I leave to hunt.

Jong Ho was surprised at my infinite mana ability, as he heard it for the first time.

He did guess that my mana regeneration rate was insanely high.

Why would I trust him so much to the point where I’d share my ability?

It’s a bit embarrassing, but I had the midget do a background search on Jong Ho using a mid-ranking assassin.

All I could find out was that he was a better man than I thought he was.

That’s why I trust him with my mother during the Noblesse incident.

I teased him about how I could not hide the truth from him, but I couldn't hate him.

Jong Ho shifted the topic to the battle's events.

"An attack through 3 level 100 shields? Definitely something else for sure."

"I don't care about how amazing he is. I'm worried for my mother's safety. The day we meet again is going to be his funeral."

My rare look of seriousness must have made him feel awkward, because he waited until I finished.

"But there one thing that I found amusing."

"What would that be?"

"Hyung, think about it carefully. If someone that skilled attacked, wouldn't they aim for the heart or through the head?"

"That's true."

"But he aimed for my stomach. Definitely an injury I could die from, but not something you'd die instantly from."

"Hm...."

"Due to the 3 shields I had on, the attack angle got shifted? That's possible. However, I felt it for sure. That he aimed for a non-vital spot on purpose."

"Their income line the Noblesse guild is heading towards annihilation, so why would he not finish you off in one hit? Don't you think his attack missed its mark?"

"As I said before, he already knows about my ability. If I take that into account, I'm guessing that he needs my infinite mana ability."

Soon as I finished talking, I pulled out my smartphone.

It was to show what I filmed on the 15th underground floor.

Jong Ho's expression turned serious, and he began to focus on the smartphone.

“What is this?”

“It’s the Noblesse’s 15th underground floor. Do you have any idea what this machine is?”

“Ah... where did I see this.”

Jong Ho was trying to think of something.

“I became sure of something after looking at this.”

“Sure of?”

“The thing which they’re extracting out of all those people. It’s mana.”

“Mana? So they extract all the mana and send it to the portal? For what reason?”

“That I do not know. But the mana required will be something that even mana from hundreds of people cannot complete. Due to how much they need my ability, they can’t act rashly.”

“If what you say is right, you’ll be okay for a while. But they’ll probably point their sword at you, just like how Noblesse did.”

“Of course I’ll have to get enough power to rip them apart. And before I do that, I need to guarantee my mother’s safety. So I could be at ease and focus on getting stronger.”

“There is a simple method.”

“What’s that?”

“You just have to cast a skill on your mother.”

“You can’t cast anything but attack skills on regular people though?”

That was true.

Including the Status Negation that Park Hyun used, as well as heal, attack and defensive buffs, etc. could not be used on anyone but the Awakened.

There was no way Jong Ho didn't know this.

But Jong Ho isn't the type to just make up nonsense.

I prayed that what he was about to say was the solution I needed.

"Recovery or buff skills are impossible. But attacks are fine, right?"

"... What do you mean?"

I couldn't help but be surprised at what Jong Ho said.

However he continued on without his expression changing in the slightest.

"Necromancer has a skill called 'Proof of Oath' that you can use."

"What's that?"

"Basically you make the target your servant."

"Wait hyung. I don't think you understand. I...."

"You can only cast it on targets much weaker than you. A skill that's like a debuff, but it is classified as an attack skill."

"....."

"Originally it's used to transfer all the damage taken by the user to the target, like a human meat shield. But the funny thing is that it also goes the other way around as well."

"Really? If there is a skill like that, I feel like Necromancer deserves far more praise than the king of VIPs, the tanks. Or even the all-purpose warriors."

"That's true. But if I didn't know about your ability, I wouldn't recommend this skill."

"What do you mean?"

"Nobody in the world can use this skill. At least not as of yet. Well, I don't think it would even be used in the future anyways."

"Is the mana cost that much? How much is it?"

“5 million. Exactly 5 million. If mankind kept evolving endlessly, it would be possible to use. If death doesn’t exist, they could continue to level and by using incredible items... cast the skill. But that doesn’t apply to you, does it?”

“But if you use that skill, won’t you take away their will? Since you could control them.”

“That’s true, but that depends on your control. You could take over their minds, or you could just have the effect of the skill on them and leave their mind alone.”

If what Jong Ho said was correct, this was the perfect plan.

Even if my mother is attacked, all the damage would be transferred to me.

Other than skills beyond being classified with a rank, there is no attack that could go through my Mana Shield.

And it has the benefit of not tampering with the will of the target if desired.

No matter how much it costed, it was something I needed to obtain.

I couldn’t hide my excitement as I asked.

“It would be incredibly expensive, right?”

“Yes... incredibly expensive.”

“I only have to Awakened Essences, but would that be enough?”

“Difficult.”

“Where could I get it?”

“Probably in the trash dump behind the market place.”

“Ah. I almost hit you. So a skill that’s worthless.”

“Of course, who would buy a skill that’s worthless even after you obtain it? If you hunt a Mimic, something crazy like that drops.”

“How did you know this so well?”

“I’ve been working on the bottom level of society for this long. This is just the basics.”

I headed to the market with Jong Ho.

*

It’s been a week since I wiped out Noblesse and Park Hyun.

I immediately obtained the skill Jong Ho talked about.

A magician could cast it by using both hands.

Thankfully it wasn’t a skill that required constant casting like Mana Shield.

It continued to stay on with just one cast, and only needed to be recasted when you controlled the target.

I needed to test the effect of the skill.

I couldn’t just cast the skill on my mother without being safe.

But there was a quick and easy way to find out.

It was Sunday morning.

I headed towards the scream I heard in the kitchen with urgency.

My mother had cut her finger while cooking.

She held onto the finger tightly.

But when she opened her hand, there was no wound, as if the cut never happened.

She was surprised, but thought of it as being fortunate. She didn’t seem that suspicious.

I was using Mana Shield.

Even if it was the all cutting rose knife, she would not have a wound.

The news had the ‘Disappearance of Noblesse’s guild members’

as a special feature.

They were treating it as a mystery, since they could not find a single trace of them.

500 were treated as murdered, but there was nothing about the portal.

The Association was not able to find the portal in the building?

The chance of that happening was zero.

And the machine set up around the portal was cleanly removed.

Guess they couldn't let it be exposed through the media.

Through the skill Proof of Oath, I could finally feel a bit more relieved concerning my mother.

But Jin is incredibly skilled.

If he's following an organization, there must be people far more powerful than him.

If they had a skill beyond a ranking? Then I would be done in without any resistance.

I had bought myself some time due to my ability.

I had to use this opportunity to the fullest so that I would not be hit by any attack. That was the amount of growth I needed.

Since level 19 to 21 dungeons could not be hit magic attacks, I went to the level 23 dungeon.

To make the hunting go by faster, I had even obtained the Louver's Necklace at the level 18 dungeon, so I could use both hands without worry.

Using the set effect, I could create a shield using their magical essences.

Anything the dungeon threw at me could easily be blocked by this shield.

I went through the level 18 dungeon for the necklace, but I also leveled.

I had reached level 170, and put all the points into the stamina stat.

There was no reason to put any more points into strength.

Just counting the amount I put in, it was already past 600.

It was something only a warrior who only put strength stat until level 118 could reach.

Both Banwol Jincheon on both my hands gave a massive stat bonus to my strength already.

Unless a skill or an item that nullified all magic appeared, I planned to put all the points into dexterity and stamina.

That was also the reason to choose the level 23 dungeon.

It was to obtain the defensive gear dropped from that dungeon.

“Jin or whoever it may be, I’ll shoot the moment I’m ready.”

Chapter 47 - The Firing From The Readied Marksman Begins (2)

After learning about my ability, Jong Ho did not stop me from entering the level 23 dungeon.

He was instead eager to inform me about the dungeon.

It was because I could go about the dungeon with Meteor Call and Iceberg in each hand.

After using Louver's gear set, I couldn't feel any rise in difficulty despite going into a dungeon 5 levels higher than before.

The level 23 dungeon has a lot of monsters.

And matching that, they should leave lots of essences after death.

Absorbing all those essences, the Louver set was like an unstoppable batter-... shield I mean.

This meant I could use both hands for attack skills.

Other than the need to obtain essences from the initial first or second run, I had no need to cast shields.

And thanks to this shield, the Proof of Oath was put to good use.

Testing the effectiveness of this shield, I found out that it was several times sturdier than other shields.

Perhaps enough to easily block an attack from Jin?

During hunting, I used Louver set's shield.

After hunting or when going to sleep, I used Mana Shield for the perfect defense.

At the level 23 dungeon, 'Lich King's Staff' dropped.

It was also the weapon I used previously.

Well a fake one to pretend I was using it.

It was a weapon that raised my Mana stat, which was useless to me.

But what I was aiming for was the 'Lich King's Armor'.

As the name implies, it was a helm and armor piece.

Magician ranker Yoon Jong-sun was wearing one of these defensive gears as well.

It didn't raise stamina or dexterity stats like regular armor.

However there was a reason why this gear was so popular.

Because each armor and helmet reduced physical and magical damage taken by 20%.

You could say this armor was made for combat.

The Titan Boots that resists all status debuff effects along with the damage reduction from the Lich King's Armor, I could display quite the combat prowess.

Hunting and combat. It was a choice to capture both rabbits. 1

Of course, it'd be only possible if the hidden boss Lich King would appear frequently.

Then it wouldn't be only a distant dream to get the Lich King's armor.

I'll make it possible like I've been doing it until now.

**

The worst part of the level 23 dungeon was the stench that my shields didn't block.

Hundreds of ghouls appear in this dungeon.

Say the word ghoul and the first thing people would imagine would be the undead or zombies.

Not dead or alive.

These ghouls were exactly that.

Skin that peeled off just by moving about.

Bodies beyond healing or saving, rotting away.

Nothing different from living corpses.

Ghouls with different attributes appear here.

The amount of variance of the monsters makes the strategies to take them down that much more complex.

They could be put into three main categories however.

Those who charge quickly, attack viciously with their nails and teeth.

Those that cast curses and magic.

And finally those who use ranged weapons or spit acid from afar.

However their attacks could never put me in any real danger.

That was because their attacks were based on poisoning.

Poisoning falls under the category of status debuff effects.

Since I was wearing Titan Boots, their main attacks didn't work on me in the first place.

The only things left they could hit me with were physical and magic attacks.

However, someone like me who had infinite shields wouldn't be hit in the first place.

All of them had metal legcuffs.

Almost like being punished in hell.

Think about it. Like a frozen field, slippery and cold, and the sound the metals clinging against the floor as they charge.

To get them all, I had pulled 300 at once.

Running to the end of the dungeon to pull them all, I saw them approach me. It was like a scene from a zombie movie.

“KWAGH!”

“Ugh. Disgusting.”

‘Ghouls with such killing intent. But they’re only fodder for my profit.’

A level 50 Meteor fell upon them.

As the skill level rose, the increase in size and speed could be easily seen.

However I couldn’t take them all out at once like that.

They’re level 23 dungeon monsters. Wouldn’t be defeated so easily now, would they?

The Meteor struck, blowing the mobs to pieces. However, as if still alive, the pieces began to charge.

Most died from the secondary fire damage over time.

The ones on the radius’ outskirts survived and began attacking again.

However.

Half out of the horde of ghouls pouring on me were sliced apart due to the Reflect Shield.

The Reflect Shield was already over level 150, with a 40% chance to deflect 65% of the damage taken.

It was time to prove that Ghouls do far more damage compared to how sturdy they are.

Hit by the 65% reflect damage, they disappeared like red smoke.

I welcomed the narration of my experience rising.

The red glow from the Blood Stone made me happy as I could be.

The speed which I’m clearing with is incredible too.

The experience per kill was far below the griffon 2 and the poison nagas...

But I was clearing out plenty of them as if buying hotcakes at a sale.

*

“Hey. Min-Cheol. The picture you showed me. I found out where I saw it before.”

“The machines installed atop the portals?”

“Yeah. Look at this.”

Jong Ho opened a thick heavy folder.

The paperwork within was yellowed with age, as it was at least 20 years old.

My hopes rose at his confidence attitude.

“This. This is it!”

When I saw the same machines from the Noblesse’s guild building, I pointed with excitement.

Just like what I saw, the picture had hundreds of Awakened connected to it, transferring mana.

Reading the information below it, apparently it was an experiment to try finding out how to stop portals from exploding.

The purpose was to pour out condensed mana to nullify the portal.

“It’s similar....”

“This about it. The post-it was made accidentally from attempts of making the super glue. Is it possible that they’re using this machinery to speed up or cause the portals to explode?”

Jong Ho had a point.

Jin and his group wouldn’t work on research to get rid of the portals. They weren’t the type to do that sort of work.

It also makes sense why they want my ability of having endless

mana.

Using my endless mana to hasten or cause the portals to explode.

The target would be to a portal above level 28, similar to the ones found within a volcano.

“Oho?”

“And apparently according to the news at that time, the research caused the portals to explode, which led to mass casualties. After that, all the nations forbade anyone from messing with the portals.”

“I’m sure of it. Mana sent to the portals hastens the explosion.”

“That’s right. They must be aiming for that.”

“The government or the association should have learned about this from the underground floor of the Noblesse’s guild building, and there should have been similar cases before. But why is this news not public? Even if you keep it under wraps to prevent mass panic, it wouldn’t make sense that it wasn’t exposed for all these years.”

“Do you think that fruits come from a tree that is rotted to its roots? Even if it bore fruit, it would probably be eaten from the inside out by bugs. You cannot trust the association or the government at the moment.”

“.....”

“Was there a point to telling you that this era is for the criminals?”

For a moment, I had thought to go to the association or the government with information regarding Jin and their group.

But due to the interference in signal, I was not able to record any proof. If I acted rashly, their guns would be pointed at me.

It’s going to be a personal fight.

I can't help it but it's going to be filled with bitterness, loneliness, and difficulties.

"Thanks hyung."

"I can understand maybe 10% of your mother's interest in studying. Found a lot of good stuff as I looked."

"Please let me know if you get ahold of any good info like this. Sorry I always rely on you."

"Do you see it? I have goose bumps. I say this every time but please let's refrain from talking like that."

"Ku. I get it."

**

In the sector of Mapo-gu was the headquarters of the Korean Awakened association.

It was a meeting dealing with special cases.

A location where they interrogated 20 members. Some had unlawful entries to the dungeon, while others had unnatural growth.

There were those that would help you get into dungeons for the right price by using their credentials.

To get their licenses revoked, they must've have done plenty of a crimes.

Most had caused physical harm or damaged property using the strength they gained from being an Awakened.

In the center sat a 40 years old man.

He was the vice president and special director of the Awakened, Kim Ho Jin.

He was yelling as he slammed the desk.

"How can this be?"

“You’re right.”

“How does someone who became Awakened in August go into a level 23 dungeon by himself?”

“No matter how rich you are, it’s difficult... What should we do?”

“What do you think. Report it immediately and take countermeasures. What. He even took the bonus for taking care of the succubi portal explosion in September? He’s definitely someone we have to confirm!”

“We’ll take care of it immediately.”

The association’s topic was Min-Cheol.

To enter the dungeons, and Awakened had to verify themselves using their license by the machinery at the entrance of the dungeon.

Both entering and exiting. All the data was recorded and sent to the association.

During both the succubi portal explosion and the attempt to receive the reward for it, the association had been suspicious of Min-Cheol.

A level 18 dungeon was understandable, but a level 23 dungeon...

A dungeon difficulty that is way beyond someone who has been an Awakened for only 100 days.

Thinking of it as a simple error, the machines were checked repeatedly for those dungeons.

The association came to the conclusion that someone was clearing the dungeon under the guise of Min-Cheol via using his license.

“Start surveillance on the owner of the license!”

Chapter 48 - The Firing From The Readied Marksman Begins (3)

After I defeated all the ghouls in the dungeon, I headed towards the center to search for the exit.

Suddenly, I heard the sound of rubble raining down.

When I arrived, the ceiling was caving down.

Since I had met several hidden bosses before, I was excited.

If all the monsters were dead and there were noise from the center of the dungeon, it usually meant that a hidden boss was appearing.

My excitement was brief as I focused again. Through the ceiling, I saw him poking his head through.

The hidden boss of this dungeon: Lich King.

Glowing with a purple aura, he stared at me with his breath cold like ice, exhaling frost.

“His size isn’t a joke.”

A completely decayed skeleton, his head was adorned with a huge crown.

The hole in the ceiling was 2m in width...

But it wasn’t enough to even squeeze his head through.

The scent of rot filled the dungeon. I wanted to get a breath of fresh air as soon as possible.

It looked like it was going to take a while for the entire body to come out.

That means that I’ll have to smell this disgusting scent for a while.

While I remained patient, the ones that couldn’t wait were my

summoned Devil Avatars.

After hunting, I had shrunk them and they were floating around me, each the size of a fist. Both had turned into 4m monsters and were pouring out skills on the Lich King.

The attack landed dead on.

But it looked like the Lich King was using some kind of shield.

He was called the 'Grand Magician of the monsters'.

From what I could find out, he used most magic spells that the average Magician uses.

And the glow from his eyes.

He was a rare boss that had his health and attack ranking change depending on the color.

Like the color of the rainbow, it was split between red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.

The closer the color of those eyes become to red, the stronger the boss is.

But this boss had the color of purple, being the lowest ranking boss.

Even so, he was hundreds of times stronger than a regular boss.

"KWUHHHHH!"

As if annoyed by the avatars' attack, his Fear spell rang throughout the dungeon.

Looking at him, I could only treat him as another trash mob.

"Mannerless bastard. You have one hell of a yell."

I had started casting Iceberg the moment he showed his face, and now smashed him with it.

The attack punctured straight through his shields and took out 1/3rd of his skull instantly.

Allowing the attack to go through, he let out another massive Fear.

Then he pulled back his head from the hole.

After a short while, he put his hand by the hole and I couldn't help but be surprised.

“Well. Shit!”

A Meteor Call was heading towards me.

A Meteor.

I casted Mana Shield without hesitation.

Louver's Shield or whatever, I didn't know what was going to happen if I was hit by that attack.

An A+ ranking magic attack.

It was so big that I couldn't even hope to avoid it.

The Mana Shield received the Lich King's Meteor and began to vibrate violently.

The vibration lasted for 3 seconds, the intensity hindering my vision.

I knew that he used Magician skills, but I didn't expect him to use a Meteor Call instantly.

The average Awakened avoided the level 23 dungeon for this reason.

The Lich King.

The lowest ranking boss with the purple glowing eyes demonstrates this level of destructive force.

Then how much would one that has a red glow show...

No matter how greedy one is, people run when they hear about the Lich King with their tail between their legs.

All those who obtain the Lich King's Armor are all tanks.

After being perfectly raised, to obtain the equipment, they go back to the level 23 dungeon.

It was like the saying, 'Avoiding poop because of fear.'

The horrible stench of decay and the incredibly strong Lich King.

It couldn't be better said.

After finishing his first attack, he finally appeared in his full form outside the dungeon.

Compared to his size, the Devil Avatars looked small.

Well, just his head is over 2m. The body that supports him must be huge to compensate.

The armor on his body did not have a single point of weakness, as if light itself could not get through.

Equipment that anyone could guess it was impossible for human hands to make.

However I didn't have time to admire his armor.

Magic was condensing at the tip of the staff.

There was no reason to avoid it.

No matter what type of attack he sent my way, I would be safe due to my Mana Shield.

However, I avoided the spell on reflex.

It was because a black orb flew towards me, the sound of sparks filling the air.

The two avatars had long been consumed by the black orb.

It was as if seeing a black hole.

"Guess he's very angry because he got hit in the eyes once?"

A red and black hue filled the crevice of his broken skull, as if filling with new life.

'A recovery ability on top of being a Magician?'

I really couldn't say much since I used Heal myself, but I was quite surprised.

I couldn't just let him continue attacking me like this.

I had to at least return the favor.

A Meteor far larger than his formed above me.

Finishing the cast, Meteor caused a torrent of winds as it came hurling down through the air.

“EAT THIS!”

The attack hit dead on his right leg.

The incredible destructive force of the attack took out his entire leg, blowing up his knees.

Now there's an 8 minutes cool downs and casting durations for Iceberg and Meteor Call.

The 20% CDR (cooldown reduction) and casting speed increase (haste) was applied, but it still had a cool down and casting time of 4 minutes each.

I was left with no choice but to use other skills.

My immediately choice was Fire Shock.

Losing his leg, his body was flailing about on the ground.

The range of Fire Shock was exactly the size of his body.

That was the reason why I had aimed for his leg and brought him down.

I ran up to the collapsed king and let down the flames.

From his head to his disembodied leg, his body was doused in flames, slowly losing life.

It looked like he didn't even have the strength to cough up blood.

But even still he was casting a spell with his staff.

“Ku... Kuruk.”

“I’ll be looking forward to it.”

From my hand on his head, unfathomable amounts of lightning coursed through him.

His health was nearly gone after all.

Even Lightning Spray was enough to finish him off.

[5,000,000 experience obtained]

I didn’t even pay attention to the narration for the experience gained.

It was because I was distracted by the loot that dropped off his corpse.

And the experience wasn’t much to begin with.

It was about taking down 50 monsters from the level 18 dungeon.

Taking the hand away from the skull, I headed toward his heart.

Within the armor dark as midnight, there were two skill books.

Although one of it looked strange.

Regular skill books have a symbol indication the class it belongs to, or at least some form of identification.

But what I was holding couldn’t be described as a book.

It was as if something in the shape of a book had liquid metal poured all over it, like scrap metal.

Not only did it lack shape, but I couldn’t even open the book.

“What is this. Is it just useless scrap?”

The ceiling continued to cave, so perhaps it was debris that fell on the Lich King’s body?

I put the skill book to my chest.

[You do not meet the requirements.]

“Huh?”

‘Why are you acting this way noona?’ is what I wanted to say.

I never heard this narration before.

All the skills so far I have obtained never had a required condition.

I was able to learn all class skills without limit before.

And that included spells that most would never have enough mana to use.

But this skill had a prerequisite.

Since I could not run the phone application inside the dungeon, I ran outside.

The other skill book that I had carried in my armpits was long forgotten.

My attention was on this item instead.

After scanning, the result showed.

[Error]

“You’d drive people nuts. First not meeting the requirements, now an error?”

Since it was already late into the night, I decided to end the hunting here.

My body was reeking of rot, so I couldn’t head back home immediately.

Near the level 23 dungeon had lots of saunas and bath houses.

Like how food stores would open up near dungeons, the everyday average people tried business as they saw fit.

They had to make a living somehow.

“Wew. I feel like I’m alive again.”

Entering the bath house filled with steam, I felt my fatigue melt away.

I could tell why the adults love these places so much.

I had obtained a one person entrance ticket to get in, and had finished cleaning all the rotting scent off me.

Even in the bath, I kept staring at the skill book.

What requirement was it that it was preventing me from learning it...

“Hyung. It’s me.”

“Uh.. Ugh.....”

Through the phone I heard Jong Ho’s sleepy voice, as if he just woke up.

“Guess you were sleeping. Sorry. I’ll just call tomorrow.”

“No no. It’s okay. I was on the verge of sleeping but you woke me up at the right moment. You rascal!”

“Pfft! There’s something I wanted to ask.”

“What is it? If it isn’t important I’ll smack you. You’ll have to let down your Mana Shield too. Okay?”

“I get it. Now, is there a requirement for obtaining skills?”

“Requirement? No. There shouldn’t be one? I never heard of such a thing.”

“Ah... Is that so?”

“Yeah. There’s also no such thing as a limit to how many skills you can learn.”

“That’s strange... Well okay. Sleep well, hyung.”

“What? Is that it? I’m going to destroy you tomorrow-”

“Love you!”

A requirement for a skill book that even Jong Ho doesn’t know about.

My high expectations for him became disappointment.

I scanned the other skill book.

‘Fire Orb’ attack skill F rank.

Pretty much friends with the Frost Orb.

“Is it because I got a one with purple eyes? Instead of armor or blood stones, all I get are trash like skill books?”

Since it was the first time Lich King appeared, I had very high expectations.

But maybe it was the ranking of the hidden boss?

The drops were disappointing to say the least.

After returning home, I threw the skill books at the corner of the room.

Perhaps it was a level or stat prerequisite issue, and with that I hope I decided to watch.

There was no need to worry about my Strength or Mana stats.

If it was one that needed Dexterity, it was going to take a long time.

“Please be a level issue.”

Chapter 49 - New Ability

It's been a week since I defeated the Lich King for the first time.

I had almost built up immunity towards the smell by now.

My level was already 199.

With this clear, I should hit level 200.

Each time I leveled, I tried to use the skill book I had obtained.

But the results were the disappointing. Still impossible.

For someone like me who was only raising the Stamina stat, the worst case scenario would be the skill book not opening due to a lack of Dexterity stats.

I prayed that it was a level issue and continued to lv up.

[Your level rose.]

I was surrounded by a bright glow, along with the narration for the level up.

I had reached level 200 in 4 months.

Unlike usual, I held off on the all-important stat allocation.

And almost as if led by something, I pulled the book out from the bag and put it to my chest.

Exactly level 200.

That's why I couldn't help but hope that I could obtain it.

"Please! I'm so curious!"

Closing my eyes, I hoped that the 'condition is not met' wouldn't pop up again.

A moment passed.

Almost as if to lessen the worry in my heart, a system

announcement I've been looking forward to came.

[Would you like to obtain Dual Casting?]

“It worked!”

Guess the requirement was level based after all.

This was a skill that didn't appear even after scanning with the encyclopedia app.

I even searched online, but couldn't find any information on it.

Perhaps it was a skill book beyond ranking, as rumors had it.

A skill without any information released on it.

I cannot know what it does until I learn it.

But no reason to hesitate.

It's not like there is a limit to how many skills you could learn.

And I didn't have to worry about what class the skill is for or the cost of the mana.

Because with infinite mana, I could use any skill as if it is mine.

“Of course I'm learning it!”

The skill book that appeared to be made of metal quickly became dust and faded away.

I wanted to test the skill's power immediately.

Since it was a skill without any information on it, my expectations soared.

“You won't know until you try. Let's try it for now.”

I had not left the dungeon yet.

Like how I used other skills, I thought of the name in my head.

‘Dual Casting.’

Soon its identity will be revealed.

However.

I spread out my arms and waited for a powerful skill to announce its presence, but the surrounding remained silent.

Seems nothing had changed.

Wondering if it was a shield, I checked.

A self-buff? That wasn't it either.

Does it need a target? Many thoughts were racing through my head.

Stumped without answers, I opened my status tab.

I definitely obtained the skill.

A skill that didn't have an experience bar.

Like 'Teleport', it seemed that it could not level up.

But if you cast Teleport, you should be able to see the effect.

While pondering, it suddenly dawned on me.

My eyes focused in on my hands.

I feel so stupid for not realizing this earlier.

I was so excited that I forgot about the skill name.

Perhaps 'Dual Casting', as the name implies, allows me to use two skills at the same time?

Thinking about it further was a waste of time.

I casted Frost Orb with one hand.

Only a single Frost Orb struck against the ground.

Now I was sure that it wasn't a skill that gave twice the output with one cast.

"If that's the case..."

With one hand, I continued to cast Frost Orb while my other

hand kept up the Mana Shield.

Filled with high expectations, I casted Teleport.

If Teleport does work....

The Teleport casted, allowing me to jump a short distance forward.

Now I understood.

Dual Casting gave me a 'third hand'.

I was able to cast two different spells at the same time with one hand.

This was already amazing, but imagine if I was able to obtain another one...

I would be able to cast four different spells simultaneously with two hands.

"Im.. Impossible...."

In combat, I lost out on my offensive capabilities due to needing one hand to keep my Mana Shield up.

To unleash more of my power, I let my shield go and was met with quite the critical situation.

I had now obtained a skill that covered that weakness perfectly.

But it seems that to use it well, I'll need some practice.

The aim needed to hit the targets was by the caster.

To be able to cast multiple skills to where I want them will take some practice.

Well, for someone who is obsessed with hunting, it shouldn't take long.

If I am able to master it, I should be 1.5 times stronger than before.

After learning the rankless skill Dual Casting, I had another issue

to take care of.

My main skills were Meteor and Iceberg, as well as Fire Shock.

All of them required time to cast and/or cool downs.

After using all three skills, I had nothing left to continue putting on the pressure.

Let's say I use one hand for the shield, while the other for Gravity Laser.

But for my 'third hand'?

I couldn't just continue casting Frost Orb or Lightning Spray when they do almost nothing.

The skill I needed most.

A spell that didn't require time to cast and no cool down.

It didn't need to have a big impact radius.

Just something to allow me to continue dealing damage while the main spells were on cool down.

Currently I had way too much money to spend.

Right now, I was focusing on growth over money, and had nowhere to spend all this cash.

The last spell I used money to buy was Meteor Call after all.

While I was wondering what new spells to learn...

I remembered that I borrowed some Awakened Essences from the midget.

I hadn't paid him back because I was saving them for Meteor Call and Iceberg.

But it looked like it was going to be awhile before I could get them to level 100.

As the skill level rose, the experience required rose as well, while the delay time between each cast slowing me down.

Even if there was bad blood between us, I had ‘borrowed’ them, nothing different from stealing.

They followed through my requests and helped me with a few things here and there.

I could not be at ease knowing that.

I didn’t want to be a vicious thug after all.

I carried the Awakened Essences with me and headed towards their office.

Chirp chirp.

A caller ring filled with the sounds of nature...?

It didn’t take long for the midget to answer the phone with his business voice.

“Yes. Lee Sung Ho speaking.”

“It’s been awhile since I last called. Do you have anyone at the office at the moment?”

“Who is thi- ... Huh! Yes. I’m still here at the moment... For what reason is it this time...”

From his voice, I could imagine his eyes filled with anxiety.

I could also almost hear the ‘What request is it this time!’ in his heart.

“Why are you so nervous? I was calling to return the essences I borrowed.”

“Ah! You can take your time returning them... Where are you? Should we come and get you? We’ll leave right away.”

Unlike what he was saying before, he was blabbering non-stop.

“Nope. I’ll be there in 5 minutes.”

“Thank you. Thank you.”

To be this happy for borrowed items being returned.

Well, these essences are worth about 100 to 200 million each.

I walked slowly to make sure I don't accidentally run into any civilians.

It would be a huge issue to run into anyone while running at abnormal speeds.

I arrived at the office.

His face was all smiles.

Almost as if he found a 10,000 won in his winter coat pocket from last year.

"You came!"

"Yes. Here are the essences."

"Oh my! I thought I'd never see the-... No no. Thank you for returning them so quickly."

Holding the essences tightly, he looked at them as if in love.

He was the splitting image of Gollum holding onto the Ring.

Since I'm here anyways, why not use the shady route once more.

I was planning to learn some A+ ranking spells after all.

"Like how I asked before, get me some skill books."

"....."

"While I was coming here, I decided on a few that I want, but there were none on the market."

"A+ ranking like before?"

"Yes. Don't worry about money and set me up a deal."

"Most things aren't that difficult to get.... but what skills are you talking about...?"

"Explosion and Holy Missile."

"Common magic like those, I can get them without much

difficulty.”

“That’s good. 3 days should be plenty, right?”

“Y.. Yes? O-of course. Plenty.”

“Ah! I also forgot to mention. Please get me ‘Eye of Insight’ as well.”

“Isn’t that a spell for the Cleric class?”

“I think it is? Well whatever, I’ll be relying on you. I’ll be back in 3 days.”

“O... Okay.”

The chance for the Lich King appearing in the level 23 dungeon was incredibly low.

I’ve only fought him once. The weakest boss with the purple glowing eyes was it.

I was still amazed how I was able to get two Banwol Jincheons from Gwidon.

I didn’t need essences at the moment.

But the gear they dropped were not things I just wanted, but needed.

“Ha... I wish at least a mimic would appear....”

Thanks to the ridiculous number of mobs, I was able to obtain a vast amount of blood stones.

But no matter how much money I had, there was no way for me to obtain a M/A+ level of gear.

I was not nervous in the slightest.

Like a machine, I continued to hunt systematically.

After taking care of all the ghouls, I headed for the exit with loot in tow.

I headed toward the exit with a hopeful heart and raised ears.

But all I could hear from the dungeon was my own steps.

“Ah! It’s so hard to even encounter him!”

I arrived at the exit.

But in front of the gate, I couldn’t help but rub my eyes.

There definitely was a gate leading out.

However, next to that gate was another gate open, slightly darker than the usual exit gates.

“... Have I gone crazy from all the scent of intestines?”

My self-doubt was brief.

I looked at the gate once more.

“Ah! Jong Ho hyung!”

I was sure of it.

Right before I entered the level 23 dungeon, Jong Ho was telling me any information that would be helpful.

It was information that I didn’t pay much attention to with the mindset of ‘go in and kill everything’.

But perhaps due to coincidences, there was a part I remembered clearly.

I was positive.

“Is it okay?”

Chapter 50 - Is This Okay?

A gate identical to the exit appeared.

The color was similar, but the shape was definitely different.

A gate that rarely appeared in level 23 dungeons.

There is no official name for the gate.

But between the Awakened, it is called Hell's Gate or the Fisherman's Needle.

Most experienced Awakeneds know the gate very well.

But it was rare for anyone to come back alive after going into it.

For certain dungeons that have hidden bosses such as the level 23 dungeon that can have any one of the 7 different ranks of the Lich Kings appear. In that gate, all 7 Lich Kings would be there.

Of course, the reward for clearing the portal would be amazing.

But the number of people heading into the gate was few at best.

A sweet temptation.

But that would be too much!

They would stare at the gate as if a fish looking at a fat juicy worm on a hook.

Unless they were real fish, they wouldn't bite into bait like that.

The exemption would be Rankers hunting for the Lich King's Armor set.

"I'm even happier seeing this more than seeing a mimic."

For any regular Awakened, this would be too much.

But I was going to enter the gate.

With many level ups, I had obtained a decent amount of stamina.

Even if the red eyed rank 1 Lich King used a skill beyond ranking,

my 5 shields would protect me.

And even after casting my shield, I had two free hands.

An exit and a gate to hell.

Looking at each of them back and forth, I moved my feet towards the gate of hell.

Inside the gate was another world.

A desolate land filled with igneous rocks as far as one can see.

The lost souls embedded in the ground howled at the skies.

Without eyes or tongues, struggling as if falling deeper into a swamp.

I felt relieved that the dungeon was large.

If the dungeon was small, all 7 of them would aggro at the same time.

Looking at the different colors of their eyes, I planned to pair two a time to take them out according to their ranking.

I had obtained the quick single spells Explosion and Holy Missile — A ranking skills that will perfectly fill the gap between my main attack skills as both skills did not have cast time or cool downs.

Explosion was a fire type magic, shooting a fireball the size of a basketball.

It was similar to the F ranking Fire Orb, but the difference in damage dealt was incomparable.

Once Explosion hits its target, it didn't disappear until there was nothing left to consume.

So unless healing skills or remove status effect skills were used, the flames would not extinguish until the target turned to ashes.

The next skill I obtained was the Holy Missile.

Magicians, Shamans, and Priests use this skill.

Causing holy type damage, it boasted massive amounts of damage against the undead.

A skill perfect for Ghouls or Lich Kings.

Casting Meteor and Iceberg towards my right, I ran at full speed ahead.

From afar, I could see 2 Lich Kings.

It was important to determine the glow of their eyes, so I stayed out of their aggro range and stared.

Green and purple.

Both were low ranking bosses.

“Yah!”

With one fluid motion, I struck one on each of them.

Almost like a welcoming tackle?

Receiving heavy amount of damage, they tried to condense their mana to heal themselves, but I casted Fire Shock, which does more damage the closer you are to the target.

“GWOAHHHH!”

“KURURUK”

They howled and flailed about in pain, unable to even attack once.

Just in case any Lich Kings were nearby, I adjusted the range on the Gravity Laser.

With my continuous attack, I was slowly blowing through the Lich King.

After that I used about 10 Explosions and rained down Holy Missile.

It looked as if light bulbs shattered across the floor.

The holy attribute of the attack, when met with the undead,

begins to eat away at their form.

It didn't take long.

“Ku... uuu.....”

The rank 7 Lich King, now just a ball of flame, had the life from his eyes snuffed out.

Then.

[5,000,000 experience obtained.]

Now there was only one target left.

I stopped using Gravity Laser and began to pour away the new skills that I've learned.

Since I did not have a limit on mana, I could spam away without a care.

If I had brought Banwol Jincheon with me, I could've made quite the scene.

Soon, eyes that glowed green from the rank 4 Lich King were snuffed out.

[8,000,000 experience obtained.]

“Oh?”

The difference between ranks were made obvious.

You could obtain more experience from the higher ranking ones.

The more you learn about them, the more I find them amusing.

There were 30 minutes left before the level 23 dungeon closed.

But it's been 5 minutes since I entered the gates of hell.

I didn't know which the 1 hour limit for the dungeons will apply

to.

To be on the safe side though, I considered as if I had 30 minutes left and hurried.

Tossing the loot into the bag, I quickly moved on.

I had arrived at the furthest I could go towards the east, and now headed towards the north end.

The bag became heavier with the drops, but my footsteps only became lighter.

“Ha... Ha...”

After taking down the Lich Kings in pairs, only the rank 1 with the red glowing eyes remained.

Trying to catch my breath, I used heal to regain my HP.

Most attacks I absorbed with my shield.

However, any attacks I didn't recognize I did my best to avoid.

Since high ranking bosses appeared, I was incredibly nervous.

If they made someone like me with incredible amounts of strength this tired, I can pretty much guess how tough they are.

If these bosses weren't (??) ranking bosses, I would use skills to lower their resistances and prevent healing.

Would've have been an easier time for me.

Sadly it didn't work on them.

Most support and curse skills didn't work on hidden bosses after all.

The last one.

Out of all of them that I've taken down, none of them dropped the armor set.

But I felt that this one would be different.

Meteor and Iceberg were on cool down.

“Come out Blue!”

“KWUHHHHHHH!”

The Devil Avatars appeared.

As I hoped for, both the summoned were of the ice attribute.

Thinking about how long the cool down and cast time for my main spells will be, I had to buy quite a lot of time.

“I’ll break through his shield. Put an icicle in his face for me, will ya?”

Both nodding their heads, they stood next to me on each side.

‘They’d be cute if they didn’t yell all the time.’

I charged at the Lich King.

“Ugh! He doesn’t even have a cast time for that?”

As if the Lich King heard my plan with the avatars, he began to pour down a blizzard on me.

Frosted arrows covered the skies, and began raining down below.

The force from the attack tore apart the ground, leaving holes as if a volcano erupted.

Getting close as I could, I casted Fire Shock and then began pouring skills until his shields fell apart.

“ORAAAAA!”

While pouring down those skills, a Holy Missile was reflected towards me.

Surprised, I twisted my body reflexively to avoid the attack.

To even use a Reflect Shield to reflect my attack.

He definitely deserved the title of grand magician.

-CRACK!

His shield finally broke apart.

The avatars finally moved on my command.

To make sure they didn't get one shot, I made sure there was plenty of distance between them.

I also commanded them to make sure they spread apart from each other.

The two avatars began to pour away frost magic at the enemy.

“3 more minutes! Then it all ends.”

“KUWAAA!”

“Oh boy. All the bulky ones seem to be always good at yelling.”

Finally, the last Lich King slowly lost the glow from his eyes as it collapsed.

The glow from his eyes were like the light from a candle, swaying in the wind.

“Ugh, gah....”

After quite a while, I was able to take down the Lich King.

Then.

The Lich King's armor and helmet broke free from his body, and began to float around.

The dungeon did not have any sunlight, but the sheer size almost made shadows appear.

Finally, when the glow from his eyes were snuffed out..

The floating armor set fell towards me.

The size began to shrink to fit me perfectly, and I could use it without having to worry about my movements being hindered.

“Oho? So this is how it works?”

It was as if the Lich King's armor set wandered about to search for its new owner until settling on me.

The shape was a bit different from what magician ranker Yoon

Jong-sun had.

There were no unnecessary ornaments and looked similar to sleeping wear, thus, it destroyed the concept that armor has to be thick.

Even if I wore a shirt over this, no one would think that I was wearing armor underneath.

The Darkness armor set, which even consumed the light around it.

While I didn't care much about the design, the special ability it provided was perfect for me.

"I guess the armor set you can get depends on the ranking of the boss? While the helmet is a bit embarrassing to wear, I made quite a fortune here."

I was tapping and admiring my armor.

"Wait, this isn't the time for that."

I headed towards his corpse.

The skill books are a must, as well as the A ranking stone. But it would be disappointing if it ended there.

Because the main dish of Awakened Essences are left.

Two of them, both the size of my thumb, had dropped.

Since I was short on time, I had hurriedly shoved in all the drops from the other Lich Kings without checking them.

I was thinking about the blissful time I would be spending outside as I checked through all the loot.

There was a chance that while taking the stones and skill books, Awakened Essences might have slipped in there too after all.

Through the gates of hell and out the exit portal, I was teleported outside of the dungeon.

Taking the stuffed backpack with me, I headed towards the

bench, refreshed as I could be.

Suddenly, I heard the sound of someone stepping on dry branches.

Reflexively, I looked towards the source of the noise.

I saw a man in a suit.

From the bushes, he was staring at me.

As soon as our eyes met, he tried to run away as fast as possible.

‘Huh? Why is he so pathetic?’

In a blink of an eye, I arrived at his location.

“U... Uwa...”

“What is it?”

“....”

Looking at his movements, he wasn’t an Awakened.

He tried to flee as if a regular person came across a dog with rabies.

If I got too excited and grabbed onto him, he probably would’ve exploded into pieces from where he stood.

We only ran for 10m down the hill, but he was gasping for breath.

“Uwa... wew....”

“Who are you? What were you doing here?”

“.....”

Chapter 51 - Beautiful Flowers Attract Bugs

The Awakened special handling force had finished their meeting. Vice CEO Kim Ho Jin had left.

After confirming he left, one man asked everyone a question.

“Hey. Who’s going to take the Kim Min-Cheol case?”

“If he’s someone that goes through level 23 dungeons as if nothing, wouldn’t I be risking my life if I were to take on this case? I have 3 kids. Ahem!”

“Oh. Of course senior shouldn’t be doing work like this,” the junior said as he massaged his shoulders.

He continued while glaring at everyone else at the table.

“If you want this case, raise your hand up quickly!”

They were too busy giving glances at one another.

But that only lasted for a moment.

One man raised his hand.

“I.. I will...”

“Oh! Se-Jin. You looked like a smart kid from the start. Confident? When you start off, you should start with the tough ones to get used to things quickly.”

“Yes...”

“And this is something the vice CEO specifically requested of us, so make sure the report looks good, okay?”

“Yes. I understand!”

“What did I say. All work?”

“In moderation!”

“Good. Do your best.”

“Yes!”

A tree cannot grow well if the roots are rotten.

The association worked just enough to keep up appearances.

“Who are you?”

The man who was keeping me under surveillance was rummaging through his wallet for something.

With his trembling hand, he pulled out something and preceded to hand it over to me.

“Awakened Association Special Maintenance Force Se-Jin Kim.”

“From the Awakened Association?”

“Yes. That’s correct. Here is my ID.”

The man gave out his association ID with fear in his eyes.

The association was made up of the elites, keeping a tight control over the Awakened.

This man must be either someone with very low ranking or a new blood.

After checking his ID, I asked him a question.

“So, what’s the occasion?”

“That’s... Are you Kim Min-Cheol?”

“That’s correct.”

“What’s your age? How long have you been an Awakened for?”

“Are you here to do an interview?”

“Ah. This is part of protocol...”

“18 years old and about 4 months since I’ve Awakened.”

“Hm... Haven’t reached the age to get a license... If you have a school ID, could you show it to me?”

“Instead of only asking me questions, how about answering

mine? What is this about.”

“You’ve been put under suspicion of using a stolen or forged Awakened ID and an investigation has been launched for you.”

“Illegal ID?”

“Yes. It’s only been 4 months since you’ve become Awakened, but we’ve been receiving data that you’ve been solo clearing the level 23 dungeon.”

Murmuring the words, he seemed to be trembling like a leaf.

‘Did I say I was going to devour him or something?’

Now I was able to grasp the situation.

I knew this would happen eventually.

Even on the first day I met Jong Ho.

When I received the reward for defending against the succubi portal explosion, I was put under suspicion as well.

Thankfully for the idiotic association member who only tried to get his work over with, I was able to avoid the annoying complications.

All he wanted to do was to confirm the ID that I was using.

Wouldn’t I just have to let him confirm and be done with it?

“Here it is. My school ID.”

“Sorry... I mean. Thank you.”

After receiving my school ID, he looked back and forth between the ID and my face to check.

“Wew....”

After checking my ID, he sighed in relief.

“All done?”

“Um... I’m sorry but can you also do a fingerprint testing..”

“...Wew.”

I felt bad for Se-Jin Kim, shaking in fear and working late into the night.

To get it over with as quickly as possible, I did as he wanted.

Beep.

My information came up.

“Thank you. It really is you. Sorry for all the trouble.”

“No worries. We’re done right?”

“Yes. The confirmation process is complete.”

“I’ll be going then.”

“It’s amazing. To be able to do a level 23 dungeon in 4 months...”

“See you...”

I didn’t want to waste any more time.

I left him behind and headed towards the bench.

‘I got away easy this time, but seems like things are going to get bothersome.’

One day, my identity would be revealed, but at least I wanted to live quietly until I defeated Jin and his group.

I called Se-Jin.

“Hey there.”

“Yes! Mr. Min-Cheol.”

“Let’s go eat to out sometime.”

“R..Really? Wow! Thank you. Thank you very much.”

Se-Jin nodded eagerly with joy.

Now for the actual reason of calling Se-Jin back.

“By the way, does this identity confirmation automatically get uploaded to the servers?”

“No. This stuff isn’t on the network. Why do you ask?”

“Please delay the report as long as possible then.”

“Huh? I’ve already confirmed that you aren’t an illegal Awakened yet. There’s no reason keep others suspicious of you.”

“Come on. Even if that’s the case, there’s no Awakened who accomplished what I did in 4 months.”

“That’s true.”

“The news on TV and newspapers will have me featured. If that happened, do you think other countries will leave me alone? They’ll be asking me to transfer over. That would be a loss for this country.”

“Aha! That makes sense.”

‘What the... I was able to convince Se-Jin that easily? What a naive person.’

“Ah... Yes... I’ll be counting on you.”

“Don’t you worry! That cannot happen!”

“Thank you. Then I’ll be on my way.”

“Yes. Fighting!”

Perhaps Se-Jin is an airhead like Tae-Seong from my class.

There were many Awakened with fame equivalent to idols.

I didn’t know if Se-Jin was acting, but I could tell that Se-Jin’s eyes shone with honesty.

Se-Jin left, and now it was time to check my spoils.

Arriving at the bench, I dumped the contents of the backpack.

With one day’s worth of hunting, I had gathered this many bloodstones.

Between the pile of stones, I saw the skill books.

Something like the thrill of lotto?

Since I couldn't tell the identity of the skill book until I scanned them, it was exciting.

I stacked the four skill books next to the bench, placing the skill book I got from the rank 1 Lich King at the very bottom.

“All right... let's see!”

The first skill I confirmed was ‘Charging’.

Used by tanks or clerics, one uses a shield to push away an enemy.

Useless.

At least it wasn't a Fire Ball or Cross Cut. An F ranking attack skill book would've been bad.

Because this skill book had quite the price on it.

Without delay, I checked the next skill book.

‘Charging Shot’ for the ranger class.

I could use skills from all classes, but I had to give up on this one.

It was only usable when equipping a bow or crossbow.

With repeated duds, I was becoming less excited.

Click.

“Wow!”

I couldn't help but exclaim.

On the smartphone was the skill's name.

‘Glacial Field.’

Out of all the A+ ranking skills, this was the first one I tried to get.

While it had an aoe freezing effect, the damage was quite lower than Meteor or Iceberg, so I had given up on learning it.

But if it comes to me like this, of course I have to learn it.

It was like an herbal medicine after a long exhausting hunt.

The finale! The only skill book left was the one I got from defeating the highest ranking Lich King.

The stronger the boss was, the better the skill book drop.

I had a good feeling about this one.

“Probably not a skill beyond A ranking, but give me a good one!”

As I put my finger on the smartphone, I became nervous.

After scanning the skill name, I felt it.

The skill explanation was as follows.

-Formless Sword Aura—

Usable class: Warrior (Other classes have 10 times the mana cost.) Mana cost: Channeled. (Per tick, uses 1% of total mana.)

Skill introduction: *Cuts apart the target with speed that cannot be followed.

*Target cannot detect the sword aura.

*As the skill rises, the destructive force increases.

*Usable on (???) ranking bosses.

Cooldown: None.

Duration: None.

Skill ranking: Attack S

Additional information: Using the skill increases user's physical and magical defensive stats increase by 10%.

Estimated skill book cost: ???

“S rank?”

Warrior class skill ‘Formless Sword Aura’ was an S ranking attack skill.

Out of all the skills I've obtained so far, none were an S rank.

I only had 3 A+ ranking attack skills.

And that's including the Glacial Field I got just now.

A ranking skills were not weak.

You can tell just by seeing it in action.

Meteor and Iceberg. No matter who the target was, they would receive massive amounts of damage.

But an S rank.

It wasn't just the skill's attack capability.

Looking at the additional information section, it said that I would obtain 10% physical and magical damage reduction.

Wearing the Lich King's armor set, each piece granting 20% damage reduction, and adding this new skill, I'd only receive half the damage of any skills used against me.

"It seems I'm slowly becoming a monster?"

As everyone said, "Amateurs are based on gear."

But at this point, I had already become a pro with all the ability and growth I've achieved.

And I had gear to boot.

It was almost enough to make me scared of myself.

Checking the skill book once more, I began to organize the stones.

Grabbing a fistful of stones and shoving them back into the bag.

It was to make sure no Awakened Essences would end up mixed with the stones.

"One, two, three. Almost threw away one."

After repaying the essence to the midget, I now had 3 again.

It was nearly time to Awaken Meteor and Iceberg, both of which were nearing level 100.

The last one?

Of course I'd have to use it on Formless Sword Aura.

However, it would be difficult to raise this skill because it only hits a single target per use.

The condition for gaining experience for skills were a little bit different from skill to skill.

Most depended on how many targets it hit.

Explosion and Holy Missile were both single target skills.

That's why I had not obtained level 100 with them even after one week of obtaining them.

Of course, I was using my infinite mana to level up my skills at an incredible rate already.

Not aoe's, but single target skills are what differentiate me from other Awakened.

Thinking about that, I remembered the Assassin Weapon Throw that Jin used on me.

That skill was also a single target skill.

Dodging my attack as if it was nothing, I became more confused the more I thought about Jin. There was something wrong, but I couldn't put my foot on it.

For that guy though, I had a present ready for him.

Hiding my evil grin, I headed home.

"My bag is stuffed more than usual today, hehe."

Chapter 52 - Coming To Me On Your Own

It's been a week since I met with Se-Jin.

Since there was no follow up, I could tell that Se-Jin did not make the report.

I've only delayed the inevitable annoyance I would have to deal with, but time was essential to my growth.

I couldn't help but feel relieved.

And if this report made me known to the world, the association as well the government will not leave me alone.

My time to train would be decreased as a result.

Not only would I lose time, but Jin and his group would be able to confirm my growth, which could lead them into acting quicker than if they were left in the dark.

All I wanted to do was quietly earn money and laze about...

Learning about my infinite mana ability, these bugs keep swarming around me.

If there is a fly in the room during summertime, it's obvious one would kill it and proceed to sleep.

Bugs are just bugs.

Rip their wings so they cannot fly.

And step on them to kill them.

The day after, I tested out the S ranking skill Formless Sword Aura.

The skill wasn't very complicated.

It casted each time I swung Banwol Jincheon.

Of course I could toggle it on and off as I wished.

But why would I toggle it off when I have infinite mana.

I knew nothing about wielding a sword.

However obtaining this skill allowed me to wield them without any issues.

I casted the sword aura on the Cerberus found in the level 21 dungeon where magic did not work.

“Kurur...”

As expected of a high ranking monster, it tried to avoid the attack by reading my killing intent.

I had aimed for its throat, but it received my attack with its back.

A huge amount of blood spilled from the deep wound, but it did not budge an inch.

However, it could not resist or react to the attack that followed.

“Ku.. Kaa...”

Exactly as the skill description read. After the first hit, the target cannot read or detect my sword aura for the next attack.

It did not have the time to determine where that attack was coming from and avoid it as well.

It had to receive my attack with all its senses sealed away.

The skill could destroy a level 21 monster in two hits.

Of course the first one was to apply the skill effect.

So really, it only took one attack to take it down.

From the sword to my hand, I could sense the tendons and bones being sliced apart, down to the minute details.

It gave me quite the goosebumps.

Almost like fighting your first Black Ghost in a dungeon?

However all monsters in the dungeon were just money to me.

Nothing more, nothing less.

Meteor and Iceberg both have leveled quite a lot.

I already have Awakened both skills after all.

After reaching level 100, both skills had their cast time and cool downs reduced by half.

The 10 minutes it took to both cast and wait for cool down had been reduced to 5 minutes.

If I was able to reach level 100 again after Awakening them, I would be able cast them without any cast time or cool downs.

Fire Shock and Gravity Laser had already reached level 100.

I had now arrived at where I can level up no more.

I had one Awakened Essence left!

I was planning to use them on either Formless Sword Aura or Glacial Field, depending on whichever hit level 100 first.

If I was able to master A+ and S ranking skills, I'd be something akin to those cheat-like characters.

That's how my hunting ended for that day.

Trying to get rid of the disgusting smell covering me, I was heading home.

Over encumbered with all these Blood Stones, I didn't think I could be happier right now.

Since most Awakened avoided this dungeon, the area was quiet and still.

The restaurants and bathhouses were quite far away.

I was turning a dark corner that did not have a street light.

A bright red light came into view in front of me.

That light, I knew that glow.

'Jin...'

I could tell it was Jin at once.

I could not make out the face, but it was almost as if that disgusting smile was visible.

Even if this area wasn't dark, the shadowy mask would be covering it.

I was half glad to see him.

I was going to kill him one day. He came on his own.

I walked towards him.

Since I had just left the dungeon, the shield from Louver's set was on.

And I was wearing the Lich King's armor set.

I would only take 40% of the damage he dealt.

Casting all my shields, I walked towards him.

One more thing. I believed.

He was calmly staying in place.

"It's been awhile, kid."

He spoke in a mocking tone, as if taunting me.

His eyes were filled with confidence.

Was it because I wasn't able to land anything the last time I attacked?

There was no way I was going to let him walk away alive today.

Pushing down my anger, I spoke to him.

"I said you will die the next time we meet. Did you think it was a joke?"

"Heh. Always a funny kid."

"...."

"The offer to work with us. Did you think about it?"

"Offer? To take over the world? Not even funny. You know even

villains don't dream about that stuff nowadays?"

"Going against the flow till the end I see. Can't be helped I guess."

"What. I guess the order from above came? Kill the kitten before it grows into a tiger?"

"Since you already know, guess there is no need to explain."

"Do I look like a kitten to you still?"

To my question, he pulled out his weapon.

He had never used a weapon before.

Instead he pressurized the air to use Assassin Weapon Throw before.

Him using a weapon must be a lot more deadlier.

"Even if you get in the way, you cannot change the tide."

"..."

"Those with strength take control. Those without can do nothing but follow... Not very different from the current affairs, no?"

He took out a short sword the size of an upper arm.

He continued while giving out intense amounts of killing intent.

"Those you tried to protect, even they will bow their heads and wag their tails to the new world."

"Did you know you made two huge mistakes. Should I let you know?"

"...."

"One. Without knowing your place, you pulled out a weapon in front of me."

"Ahaha! Amusing as usual."

"Two. I'm one heck of a mama's boy!"

“...”

“ORAAA!”

Finishing my words, I casted Hold and Bind towards him.

His feet was bound tightly, and he could not move at all.

I stabbed him with Piercing Sword.

However, just as before, only black smoke remained where he was.

This wasn't a dungeon, an area designated by the association, or even the Noblesse guild.

If I used anything like Meteor or Iceberg, the ruckus would bring in tons of people.

While hiding his form, I could only listen to the sound of his laughter.

“Ahahaha! Again, kid.”

‘I have to kill him quietly. As painfully as possible too.’

Suddenly.

An attack towards my head.

The short sword Jin was holding onto was stabbed into my shield.

It didn't take long for the weapon's form to disappear, as well as the shield to recover.

His attacks with a weapon were different from before.

Even with the 40% damage reduction, he had caused this much damage to my shield.

‘Awakened Assassin Weapon Throw. His attack skill with a weapon. Such power.’

A few seconds after the attack, a red glow flew in front of me.

Going through all my shields in one hit, the short sword

scratched against my armor.

Aiming for the heart and neck, the weapon was stuck into the shoulder plate.

I was casting Mana Shield.

It was definitely a skill beyond ranking.

“KUHAHA! Seems you’re quite shaken, kid. Is it because the Mana Shield you trusted so much has become useless?”

His voice coming from the shadow was filled with confidence.

Recasting my shields, I grabbed both Banwol Jincheon with one hand.

If it was a regular sword like the one made by the blacksmiths, it would not be possible.

But the Banwol Jincheon that Gwidon dropped was plenty capable of doing so.

Once more came his cross cut attack.

He appeared before me again.

“Are you planning to grab me with your left hand or something?”

“Looks like you enjoy playing hide and seek. I really dislike running around to catch someone though.”

“Childish words from someone who’s about to die.”

“Really?”

Swinging my 2 stacked swords, it sounded like the air was being cut apart.

I had casted Formless Sword Aura.

As if sneering at my pathetic attempt, he casually hid his form.

It was then.

Almost like grabbing smoke, I held him by the collar.

“Wha-at?”

“Fun huh? Guess hide and seek is over? Now you’re it.”

In panic, he attacked in a flurry of slashes and kicks.

Attacking as if an animal with both feet, trying to rip apart his opponent. Reminded me of a wild animal, maybe like a cat.

Oh well. Without much concern, I slammed him to the ground.

With my near 1800 strength, the ground split.

The shock made his body go limp, as if a building that lost its foundations.

However there was no need to worry.

Most assassins raise points into dexterity, so their recovery rate is incredibly high.

This kind of injury should heal within moments.

He can’t die yet.

“Ku-kuhuk!”

Red blood flew from a fit of coughing.

Still, I did not let go of him.

Well, it could be fun to let him go so I can catch him again and bring him to near death.

However, I could not waste time, even if this is an area that’s desolate for the moment.

The reason why I was able to catch him as he hid his form in the shadows was the Eye of Insight skill that the midget got me.

A skill used by priests, it gave the user the ability to see through objects.

It was used for monsters that used stealth. And for detecting bosses.

However, the skill level needed to be higher than the monster’s

skill level for stealth.

One amusing thing I found is that this skill did not work on mimics.

You could only find it by swinging blindly through the air until you hit something.

I had gotten the skill to level 100.

Jin's Shadowstep was either level 100 or something below that.

Unlike Shadowstep, which gains experience each time it is used, the Eye of Insight gains experience per target hit.

To monsters that weren't using stealth, their weaknesses were revealed.

It was, without a doubt, a very useful skill.

What if Jin's Shadowstep was above level 100? What made me so sure?

Even if an assassin placed all their points into mana and kept using that skill for 40 years every time it was off cool down, it was impossible to master it.

At level 100, it would take 97 million experience to level up or so?

From his mouth, a painful moan came out.

"Kuhuk! Kuhuh!"

"There's no time. Hurry up and heal."

Facing the red glow from him, I continued to speak, expressionless.

It didn't take long.

Almost as if his neck was realigning, he began to heal back up.

"Kuh.. how did you..."

"I'll start the questions. You don't have to answer all of it like a good boy. You'll be telling me everything anyways."

“Ku...huh..”

“Per question, 1 cm.”

“What... do you mean...?”

“Every time you avoid my question. The amount of your body that you’ll lose. It’ll be cut away instantly.”

“....”

I took off his mask, and stared at him with the eyes of a hunter looking for its prey.

“Where are they? Where are your bosses at?”

Chapter 53 - Coming To Me On Your Own (2)

-Two hours before Jin went to visit Min-Cheol—

In a pitch dark room was a figure, hiding behind the black curtains.

One of the three leaders of the radical group, code name ‘Joker’.

At his call, Jin appeared.

“Jin. Is there any strange movements from him?”

The only source of light in the room was the red glow from Jin.

Nodding his head, he answered.

“Just the usual. Other than his insane growth rate that is.”

“How should we deal with him. At this rate, he’s going to become an obstacle in our way. What’s your thoughts?”

“I think we have to make a decision. If he becomes any stronger, he’s going to become a monster.”

“Hm... I also agree. But if he does turn over to our side, then it will be a matter of time before he becomes the one’s right hand man...”

“....”

“Other than me, the two leaders also seem to be somewhat aware of him as well.”

“I guess it can’t be helped.”

“Try to entice him one more time. If it doesn’t work, get rid of him before he becomes someone else’s. Make sure it’s done without anyone noticing.”

“I’ll do as you command.”

“With your power, you should be able to take care of him without any issues, right?”

“Of course. He couldn’t even hit me once. I’ll take care of him without even the rats knowing about it.”

Jin was an existence that moved only to follow orders.

He only worked upon Joker’s summons and commands.

The ideal person they both wanted.

He was going to show that strength is power, and power determines your place in society.

Jin hid his form into the shadows.

“Where is it? Where are your leaders at?”

“Kuhuhu. You’re really amusing... To be this strong.”

“....”

“AHHH!”

Instantly his pinkie was cut off.

A painful cry rang throughout the quiet still air.

Worried that someone might hear, I covered his mouth.

And I whispered in his ears.

“Just like how I killed Park Hyun, you’re going to wish that someone else appeared and killed you.”

Muffling.

“Hm? Did you reconsider talking already?”

I moved my hand that was covering his mouth.

It looked like he had already recovered from being pummeled to the ground.

Maskless, he gave me his fake smile and spoke.

“No matter how much you struggle, you cannot resist them.”

“Sure. If you already gave up, it wouldn’t be fun.”

“Kuhuhuhu.”

“Seems you’re right handed from how you’re holding your weapon. From now on, you’re left handed.”

Without a hint of hesitation, I swung Banwol Jincheon towards his right wrist.

As if tearing the air itself, it cut his wrist off cleanly.

Screams came from the mouth that I covered once more.

“You can still use chopsticks with your left hand. Speak. The location of your so-great leaders.”

The red glows from his eyes seem to boil with anger.

“Ugh! Even if it is not at your hands, I’m already dead. That’s the only choice left for those that cannot follow orders.”

“You know already. I fought you to kill you in the first place.”

“....”

“But do you know when a person feels most helpless?”

“Urgh! When.”

“When you can’t even choose to die on your own free will. When you don’t even have enough strength for that. The weak do not even have the right to choose their own death. At least according to your so-great ideology. Isn’t that right?”

His smile had been long gone since he heard my words.

Must be feeling the dread of not knowing how long this torture would continue on for.

No matter how much loyalty and determination he has...

Noblesse’s guild leader Park Hyun also became weak when it came to her life.

Awakened or not, you cannot help but fear if you’re human.

Because they are existences that feel pain and fear.

“S.. Stop! Ugh.”

With how long the torture was going, he was slowly losing both his body and sanity.

Since I couldn't stay in the middle of the sidewalk for long, I moved him to a mountain that was next to the hunting grounds.

Who knew I would be thankful that most high level dungeons are in rural areas like this.

It was a level 23 dungeon.

That meant that this place was not found and left alone for 23 years.

I asked the man who gave out only ragged breaths.

"Do you want to die?"

"P... Please kill me!"

He kept screaming while holding onto the mutilated pieces of his body with his left arm.

My relentless attacks had reduced him to a state of trembling fear.

Thanks to his high dexterity state that allowed him to rapidly regenerate, his life wasn't in any danger.

Only extreme amounts of pain remained.

"I think I'm going to go crazy from holding back on killing you. I'm doing my best to hold back, you know? So talk then. If I hear the answer I'm looking for, I'll kill you."

"U-Under a single sun, the three stars exist..."

Like a person looking for water at a desert, he was desperately seeking the sweet release of death.

"Sun? Stars? What bullshit are you talking about?"

"Under the one, three leaders exist."

"Are you trying to audition for a movie? Where's your common

sense.... And the one, is he the commander? And the leaders are the vice captains?”

To my question, he nodded his head and continued.

“The three leaders are spread out. Seoul, Gangwon, Incheon. But the location of the sun is known only by the leaders. I’ve not met with the sun once.”

“If I know about the leaders, I can guess the strength of their goons. Tell me, what’s their combat capability?”

“Each of the 3 has enough strength to match everyone working underneath them, including me. No. They are probably even stronger. Ugh...”

“So?”

“The one I follow is called Joker. Out of the three leaders, he has the highest combat capability.”

“What’s Joker’s level?”

“Over 600. But something that goes beyond levels. The class....”

“What is it?”

“Urgh... Warrior...”

“Are you kidding me? There’s like tens of warriors gathered in front of most dungeons you know?”

“All leaders have a subclass.”

“What?”

This was the first time I was hearing of it.

If you Awaken normally, you would receive a class.

For me, it was the magician class. Jong Ho obtained warrior.

But a subclass?

“That’s right. Joker Awakened with two different classes.”

‘Ha, right.... There are cases like that?’ or so I thought, masking

my astonishment.

“What’s the class?”

His next words surprised me, to say the least.

“Joke possesses the subclass Executioner.”

“Executioner? There’s a class that kills people?”

Executioner, someone with the task of taking the lives of the condemned.

I needed to know more about Joker.

He nodded to my question, seemingly given up on everything.

It appeared as if the only thing he cared about was to die as soon as possible.

“Tell me more.”

“Joker’s combat capabilities shine not only during hunts, but in combat.”

If you know yourself and know your enemy, you win a hundred times out of a hundred fights. The information Jin was giving to me was crucial.

Not only that, but he was revealing the strategies of someone I didn’t even have a clue about.

Because Joker had the highest combat capabilities of them all, I focused learning all I could on this topic.

“Joker’s Executioner subclass has a passive called Isolation.”

“....”

“A single target that Joker chooses takes increased damage. A specialized ability in 1v1 to annihilate the opponent.”

“Alright. The other two also have subclasses as well.”

“T... That’s right.”

“The strongest one is Joker, but what about the sun! Is this sun’s

combat capabilities far beyond comparison with the leaders?”

“As I said before, I do not have any information on the sun.”

Jin continued to stare at the floor, spilling out all the information while being on the verge of death.

We continued to talk for a long time, and I was able to obtain lots of valuable information.

His eyes no longer held life in it, staring off into the void.

I could no longer converse or question him.

He kept saying the same thing over and over.

“Please no more, kill me... Please, please kill me.”

“....”

“Please... kill me.”

“It was good information you provided. This is the best I can do for you out of respect.”

Towards Jin’s neck, I swung Banwol Jincheon.

His head and body were separated in a single cut, and he instantly lost his life.

The head rolled about, bleeding profusely like his body was.

On top of that, I casted Explosion.

“Trash like this cannot be recycled.”

With cold eyes, I looked at his remains disappearing.

The flame magic explosion had reached level 100.

I had to remove him from existence as quietly as possible without anyone noticing.

It didn’t take long for even the traces of his corpse to disappear.

Not even his ashes were left.

I returned home to gather my thoughts.

I was not overly concerned with the radical faction as a whole.

The one I had to be ready for was the one Jin served, Joker.

According to Jin, the only one who knew of my abilities fully was Joker.

The other two leaders barely knew anything about me.

The reason was the following.

Even the leaders fought and kept their guards up amongst one another.

It was probably to obtain more power and prestige from the big honcho above them.

To do that, they had to have power that was cut above the rest.

Because the only thing they sought after was power.

However, the 3 leaders probably had nearly the same amount of power.

I was told the Joker was the strongest, but the difference wouldn't be that much.

The only difference left between them?

Their subordinates and the combat capabilities they bring to the table.

For that, Joker had tried to obtain me.

Jin had said that Joker's subclass was the Executioner. The ability is as follows.

The target Joker chooses have a mark appear on them.

If someone attacked the marked target, all the attacks would become 3 times stronger.

However. Only single attack skills would work, and there could be only one marked target.

As said before, it really was a passive made for 1v1s.

And his main class was a warrior to boot, which have both excellent defense and offense.

“Above level 600. Two classes. Both of which have their own passives.”

Of course, I could infinitely spam all skills from all classes, as my passive was infinitely mana.

Still, without a doubt the opponent is tough.

To face Joker, it seemed I needed more defense.

Lich King's armor set and Formless Sword Aura reduced 50% of the damage taken, but it wouldn't do well enough against someone who did 3 times the damage than normal.

The only answer I could come up with was to grow stronger.

With a defensive strategy on how to block all his attacks as well.

Since my existence was not reported to the boss as well, Joker could not move carelessly.

That's why Joker had Jin put me under surveillance.

I thought that the pride Joker had as a leader prevented chasing after me personally, but I confirmed that this was the reason why from Jin.

“For a training regime, this is too Spartan for me.”

Chapter 54 - Out Of The Way! An Unwelcome Guest Of The Dungeon Comes

“Hey! Are you serious?”

Hearing my story, Jong Ho was freaking out.

He heard from me that I took down Jin and obtained information from him.

I answered calmly, and continued the conversation.

“Yes. I already thought I had to take care of him soon ever since Se-Jin Kim from the association gave me a visit. But he saved me the trouble and visited me on his own.”

“So you took down Jin in one move, and even took information from him?”

“Yes. I already told you?”

“Oh boy. You’re scary you know? I’m more scared of you than Jin or the radical faction. My liver is shaking in fear, I can’t even enter this house.”

Jong Ho waved his arms about, while giving me a playful look.

While shaking his head too.

This guy’s class was a warrior.

His special attribute must be humor or something.

I couldn’t hate him no matter how hard I tried.

Can’t leave him hanging with his humor.

I put my hand on Jong Ho’s shoulder and spoke.

“Meteor Call! It’s been fun, hyung.”

“Ah. Wait. It’s a prank, bro. A prank!”

“Pfft. Ah! Hyung, what’s your passive? A sense of humor?”

“Hey! I have quite the passive. Nothing compared to yours though.”

“Really?”

“I have a low chance to attack twice. Without delay. The passive is called ‘Berserker’s Onslaught’.”

“Oho.. That’s pretty good. Does it matter if the attack is a skill or a regular attack?”

“Yeah. Even if the second attack triggers from a skill, there is no mana cost for the second attack. I guess you can look at it as a free attack I get? When I first Awakened, it happened on its own, so I was surprised.”

“I would be too. Must become better the higher your level gets and the stronger your skills grows.”

“That’s something in the future to consider. But why do you ask about it now?”

The reason why I asked Jong Ho about this topic was to find out information regarding this subclass that Joker possessed.

I was pretty sure Jong Ho would know something like this.

I put on my serious face once more and continued to ask Jong Ho.

“Hyung. Do you know anything about subclasses?”

“Of course. It’s when you Awaken with two classes?”

“Yes. That’s right! Could you tell me exactly what that’s about?”

“It’s super rare, but I heard some of the top rankers in the association have subclasses.”

“I guess you can’t get in the rankings just my leveling quickly.”

“Of course. You need to get a good class. The passive too, but it’s all random.”

“Wait, it’s difficult to level even with two classes?”

“Yes. Think about it. If a warrior had a magician as a subclass, you would need points in strength, mana, health, and even dexterity. All stats would need to be raised.”

“Yeah.”

“If that happens, you’d become a jack of all trades. Focusing on your attack power will make your defense lack, and vice versa. It would make hunting impossible. You can’t do both.”

“I guess that makes sense.”

“And there are cases that blacksmiths get subclasses when they’re Awakened. This is also like losing the lotto by a single number.”

“For a blacksmith that can level up by swinging their hammer, gaining a subclass with its passive is useless, right?”

“Exactly.”

Thanks to Jong Ho’s explanation, I could understand it now.

My passive that gave me limitless mana was also given to me at random.

No one knew about the passives other than their effects.

Classes were the same.

That was the reason why I searched the web intensely after I became Awakened about passives.

Because there were cases where the passives would ruin any chances of making a living, even after being Awakened.

I asked the most important question.

It was about Joker.

“Then how about a warrior class having the executioner subclass?”

“Can that even happen? That’s like 3 generations of... more like all the luck from every generation in your family coming

together?”

“....”

“I’ve only saw the executioner class in books, as there are not many who have it. Not only that, after being Awakened, they become S ranking special individuals, and most of them end up working for the association.”

“Hm....”

“It would be against the law for them to level up above 300. Of course, the executioner class is really hard to level up. Most skills are single target, and the mana cost is insane.”

“It’s bad enough to have a law made about the class?”

“Because they don’t know if they will defect into a killing machine. Though if it is a subclass, I guess you could hide it.”

I realized that my situation was worse than what I thought previously.

And all 3 of them had subclasses.

There were two more monsters like this one.

On top of that, the final boss above them.

While thinking about this, I accidentally spoke aloud.

“Guess it’s going to be tougher than I thought...”

“What? Who? No way...?”

“....”

“Am I right? Really? That’s insane! The radical faction’s boss is a warrior with a subclass as an executioner?”

“No, I heard he’s just one of the leaders under the boss?”

“That’s crazy.”

Putting a hand on his forehead, he stared at the ceiling.

For a while, he only sighed.

I broke the long silence.

“It’s not like there isn’t a way.”

“A way? What’s that?”

With both his hands out, I had Jong Ho’s full attention.

At his question, I quietly put on the Lich King armor set.

Then I put on the Banwol Jincheons as well.

“I’ll need to carry all the equipment and work hard.”

“Oh boy. That’s just like you.”

“Hyung, would you also like to come along?”

“Where? The level 23 dungeon? No thanks. Thanks to you carrying me through the level 18 one, I grew enough to laze around for the next three months. And are you really in a situation to help others? Just come back safely.”

“I knew you would say this. I understand. I’ll just bring the warrior skill books if they drop.”

“I decline.”

“I decline your decision to decline. I’ll be going then, hyung.”

“Gah. I’m guilty then. Guess I’ll have to get up too.”

“Hiyaa!”

“KUH-UK!”

Hit by the Awakened Meteor Call dead center, all the ghouls perished at once.

It was a damage that was on another level compared to what it was like at 60.

The ghouls were torn apart, while their remains charged at me.

Honestly, the damage was enough to even obliterate the remains instantly as well.

The number of meteors did not increase, but the size had by an enormous amount.

It was the same for Iceberg.

The speed and accuracy. Both seemed to increase with my growth.

Skill proficiency did not only include the level of the skill, but also the accuracy and understanding of how it worked.

Once I hit level 200 with it, I should be able to cast the larger and more powerful version without any limitations on time.

Growth. Raising my health and dexterity stats via growth.

Depending on that growth, I get increases in skill levels. The things I needed badly.

That's why I couldn't be satisfied with the level 23 dungeon.

I needed to go to dungeons of higher levels so I could obtain even more experience.

However. The association was already putting me under surveillance.

If I cleared dungeons above level 23 solo, their suspicions will only grow further.

However, it would be incredibly stupid of me to go with a party.

After finishing the hunt and returning home via taxi, I thought of an idea.

The most Se-Jin Kim could hold off on the report to the association would be one month.

If data of me clearing higher level dungeons come into their hands?

Another member would be immediately dispatched to find out about me.

'Is there not a way?'

Then I had a decent solution come up.

‘Mastering the Shadow Step that Jin used to use, and using a forged ID to run the dungeons?’

It wasn’t a bad idea.

It was illegal though.

The skill Jin used was an S ranking stealth skill.

In order to detect the user, one would need to have the Eye of Insight skill and have the level of it match or be higher than Shadow Step.

The chances of someone mastering the heavy mana costing Eye of Insight was very low.

However, it also was not easy to master Shadow Step when it obtained experience only on single use.

And I only had roughly a month and a half worth of time left.

I would lose all my time on preparing.

“Stealth.. I need an aoe stealth skill...”

While it would use up an incredible amount of mana, it would be able to stealth many targets at once.

That would allow me to level it up a lot faster.

But I didn’t know if such a skill existed.

“Hm? What did you say, dear customer?”

“Ah... nothing. Just talking to myself, driver.”

“Haha. Alright.”

“Sorry Mr. driver, but could you go to Sinseol-dong instead?”

“Huh? You said you wanted to go to Guli though...”

“Yes. Something came up.”

“I understand. Sinseol-dong it is.”

Passing my house, it was a long while before the taxi arrived at Sinseol-dong.

This was where the midget's office was located at.

‘When it comes to obtaining skill books, there is no place like this.’

Entering, I saw the midget and his two goons guarding the place like usual.

Confirming my arrival, the three of them bowed in greeting.

“So you’ve come?”

“Oh. What services do you need of us this time?”

“Yes. Have you been well?”

“Of course. We’re doing well thanks to you. But what skill book do you need this time?”

“You already know without me telling you?”

“What other reason would you have to visit us?”

Smiling, the midget continued.

It seemed that he was being the middleman between these trades, nicking some in the process.

At this point though, money didn’t even register to me as a concept.

It didn’t matter at all.

“Ah. Guess the commission fee you got from the skill books I’ve obtained have been quite a lot? Since you’re greeting me with such happiness.”

“Huh? Ha... Ha... I mean, we did the work...”

“That’s true I guess.”

I went to the sofa where they were gathered.

It was a situation where I needed information even from these

two goons.

Sitting between them, I brought up the main topic.

“I’m looking for a skill.”

“Yes. As expected.”

“It’s a skill assassins use, for stealth purposes. Something that would allow for mass stealthing.”

“Hm....”

The midget was lost in thought while stroking his chin.

Both the goons as well.

It didn’t take long for the goon with the berserker class to speak up.

“Well.. There is one, but it’s really rare....”

“Expensive?”

“No. It’s an unused skill, so the cost isn’t high. However, it’ll take a while before we can get it.”

Hearing that the price wasn’t high, the midget glared at the berserker.

I couldn’t help but think ‘What a scammer.’ in my head.

Pushing down my anger, I asked again.

“So there is a skill like that?”

“Yes. ‘Mass Stealth Jutsu’ is the name of the skill, but it’s an executioner class skill.”

“Executioner?”

“Yes.”

It was as if fate had tied these together.

Why did it have to be an executioner class skill.

I was bothered by this existence known as Joker once more.

“The user can be stealthed as well, right?”

“Yes. Of course.”

“One week! It’s possible, right?”

“Wew... Guess it’ll have to be possible.”

“Good. I’m glad since the cost isn’t much, I won’t have to prepare an Awakened Essence.”

“Yes. That’s right. It can be done with money as well.”

It was an answer that I welcomed.

A skill that had everything I needed.

Ah. I almost forgot one thing.

“One more. Can I get a fake Awakened ID?”

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(2)

I obtained the skill book and new ID, as well as the thumb to go along with it.

By thumb I mean one that's made of silicone for thumbprints.

Instead of taking a week, it only took 4 days instead.

They said they were able to get it easier than they expected.

Who knew the very goons that I hated so much would be this useful to me.

It seemed that fate can give benefits far beyond one's imagination.

From Jong Ho, I asked for additional information regarding the executioner class.

Since it was a rare class, the information of their skills could not be found on the app or on the internet.

The fight would be easier if I could, at least to some degree, predict his attacks.

Most of the skills for the executioner used martial arts, especially hand to hand combat for single targets.

A human weapon, literally speaking.

Other than the skills that were beyond ranking, I was able to get the gist of them.

Running around the level 23 dungeon, I continued to use the Mass Stealth Jutsu on the ghouls.

The faster the skill level rose, the faster I could get back to my secretive growth regime.

However, the more I used it, the more I thought that this skill was broken.

A skill that made all living organisms within a certain radius vanishes from view.

Most skills other than attack skills cannot be used on monsters usually.

Heal, buffs, or enchant type spells could not be casted on them.

The only form of skills that worked were the ones that inflicted harm on them.

But oddly enough, the Mass Stealth Jutsu worked on monsters as well.

Inside the dungeon, hundreds of ghouls were present.

A little flicker above their heads appeared, and then suddenly all of them vanished from view.

I was still easily able to see them using Eye of Insight, however.

Thanks to this mechanic, I was able to level it up to level 105 in 4 days.

It was only possible because I gave up sleep and leveling to invest in this skill.

I even used the remaining Awakened Essence on this.

The Awakened Mass Stealth Jutsu could not be identified by the Eye of Insight.

It was a skill I used, but due to how high level the stealth ability was, I could not see it anymore.

Thankfully, the hidden targets would be revealed if they tried to attack me.

The ghouls appeared once more as they tried to attack me.

The Eye of Insight was an aoe skill, so someone from the association could be level 100 with it.

To be undiscoverable, the price of one essence shouldn't be that much.

No cool down or cast time, but with the mana cost of 1500 per use.

The Mass Stealth Jutsu could be said to be a skill just for me.

"Skill book, ID, and information on the skills done. Guess the only thing left is to hunt?"

What I needed most right now was my defensive capabilities.

If he was at the tier of a major, he would definitely have skills above ranking.

The Mana Shield that I thought was the ultimate shield becoming useless. Who would've thought.

My offensive capabilities on the other hand, I had enough as both Meteor and Iceberg was nearly level 200.

Ah! Almost forgot my Formless Sword Aura.

There were some skills and defensive items that I was eyeing for.

To find them, I headed towards the level 28 dungeon.

Everyone remembers. Korean Choi So-Hyeon was the first person to solo clear a dungeon, and it was the level 28 dungeon.

However, humanity could fight up to the level 30 dungeons if with a party.

No information exists on the dungeons beyond though.

According to the information I received, there was a reason why it was so difficult to solo clear dungeons beyond level 28.

It was due to the sheer size of the dungeon!

And the amount of monsters to match it.

Of course, the toughness of the monsters was part of the reason why.

No matter how strong an Awakened might be, there is a limit to their mana.

What about a warrior who doesn't require mana to do basic attacks charge forward?

No. Within the level 28 dungeon, physical attacks do not work.

Monsters that drop insane amounts of experience points.

And the chance for some rare loot to drop from the boss.

There was no reason to hesitate at all.

I scanned my ID card.

Following that, I used the silicone thumbprint to finish the identification process.

-Dungeon is being activated.-

“Report.”

Joker's angry voice filled the dark room, giving it a heavy atmosphere.

This was to be expected, since Jin was one of his top ten subordinates.

He trusted him obviously, and his skill wasn't that bad to boot.

But that Jin he trusted could not be contacted for 3 days.

That was after he left to take care of Min-Cheol.

Suppressed by Joker's aura, he quaked in fear as he continued his report.

“Yes! Joker. We were still unable to find any traces of Jin.”

“UAHHHH!”

The S ranking bloodstone that Joker was holding in his hand.

It's a stone that most blacksmiths would have difficulty processing.

However, in Joker's hand, the stone was ground to dust like tofu.

The glow of the stone illuminated one side of the room, and the reporting subordinate laid on the ground, groveling and trembling in fear.

"I apologize! I'll call in additional members to find him for su.."

"Begone."

"....."

"Just like what you're thinking, Jin is dead. Guess the tiger cub has gotten a lot stronger than we thought."

"What do you mean..."

Joker's face was painted with rage as he spoke.

But with it, there was an unfathomable smile with it.

And he continued.

"Assign someone new to lead the group that Jin once led."

"Yes! Joker!"

"Soon, the one will be moving soon. I will judge the one who killed Jin after."

"Understood! Joker!"

After that, the messenger fled the room.

Then.

"Ku.. KUHAA..KUAHAHAHA!"

Joker laughed with insanity.

The rage that filled him was nowhere to be found.

He spoke as he looked at the powder of what used to be a bloodstone.

"Yes..more! Be further drunk in your strength! When the day comes to fight, I will be offering you as a sacrifice to the one!"

The association's Awakened special governing sector suddenly became chaotic.

It was because data was received that someone had entered the level 28 dungeon.

However, this happened from time to time, so there wasn't much of a panic.

It could just be a simple data error, or perhaps malfunctions with the scanner.

After 40 minutes later, yelling mixed with cursing filled the room.

The Awakened with the same ID had re-entered the dungeon.

"Ah shit! What is this?"

"It's gotta be an error with the scanner?"

Then. One of the many people standing by the computers yelled.

"The data does not match with Choi So-Hyeon."

They had compared the data with the only solo clearer of dungeon level 28.

Another responded after hearing that.

"What kind of insane person would be clearing a level 28 dungeon in 40 minutes?"

"No way. Lots of rain fell this week. I'll contact that maintenance team."

Throughout the chaos, the department head Kim Ho Jin quietly observed the situation from the end of his table.

Only for a moment though. Then he spoke.

"Contact the association hunters."

"Huh? Wouldn't it be better to check if it is a machine error, chief..."

“That could be the case if the data for re-entry didn’t come. Perhaps someone with a death wish going into his last dungeon.”

“First, we’ll be contacting the other association members near the area.”

“Hunters first! I’ll be going to the scene as well.”

“Yes!”

“And hey! Se-Jin Kim, come to my room.”

Focusing only on the task at hand at his post, Se-Jin Kim stood up at once and replied to the summons of the chief.

“Yes! Understood.”

After entering the room, Se-Jin was busy trying to read the mood of the room.

A new blood who just came in, how many times would they talk with the department head...

Chief Ho Jin broke the silence.

“How are you doing recently?”

“Yes. I’m getting used to it quickly.”

“Good. It must be quite the confusing for you right now. Glad to see you’re giving it your best.”

“Ohahaha. Thank you.”

“But I heard you were taking the Kim Min-Cheol case?”

“Yes. That’s correct. I am taking care of that.”

“Nothing strange to note with that?”

Ho Jin was asking Se-Jin with a different look in his eyes.

It wasn’t the look of a high ranking official looking at their employed.

It was the look of a prosecutor asking a criminal.

To his question, Se-Jin replied with an awkward smile.

“Yes. For now... I have only observed him entering the dungeons, and there was nothing special to note.”

“Really? What does it look like to you? Do you think he has a fake ID?”

“From what I saw, other than the unusual speed in growth, there was nothing else to note...”

“Do you know the ruckus going outside?”

“Yes. About the level 28 dungeon?”

“Yep. But you know. I feel like the two of them are the same person.”

“Huh? Kim Min-Cheol and the person entering the level 28 dungeon?”

“Of course. Well, we can confirm it when we get there.”

“....”

“Please continue to do your best. Even if the civilians continue to swear and ignore us, if the association continues to change, we’ll be able to receive acknowledgement someday.”

“Yes. I’ll do my best.”

“Okay. You can leave now.”

Leaving the room, Se-Jin could tell.

That chief Kim Ho Jin already knew what Se-Jin knew about Min-Cheol.

He didn’t ask directly, but Se-Jin could feel it.

That this short talk wasn’t an encouragement between fellow workers, but a warning.

“We’re almost there.”

“Okay.”

As the level of the dungeon rose, the amount of dungeons lessened.

A level 28 dungeon meant that it was not discovered for 28 years while it stayed in place.

Kim Ho Jin and his escorts met with the hunters, deploying en masse to the level 28 dungeon entrance.

The data continued to arrive from there.

“I requested for about 20 or so, but how did it go?”

“Yes. They’re on their way.”

“He could be in stealth. How about the summons for a cleric ranker?”

“Lady Hwang Young Hee is coming along as well.”

“Good. It’s a dungeon with low entrance rate. Far from the association. And he’s incredibly skilled. Focus on keeping yourselves alive only.”

“Yes.”

They drove up the long mountain trail for quite a while.

Finally, the vehicle arrived at the entrance of the dungeon.

With a cigar in his mouth, Ho Jin spoke.

“How long since he entered again?”

“Entered at 14:21. 30 minutes has passed.”

“Okay. In 10 minutes, we should be able to see him.”

As Ho Jin finished speaking, the association hunters as well as cleric ranker Hwang Young Hee arrived.

“Lady, thank you for coming.”

“Ohoho. Mr. Ho Jin, it’s been awhile.”

“Hope you’ve been well?”

“An old woman like me passes time without knowing how much time has passed.”

Hwang Young Hee was a level 520 cleric ranker, ranking 3rd out of all Awakened.

Unlike the simple neighborly grandma she appeared to be, she was a skilled cleric who mastered 7 different cleric skills.

The reason why she was summoned was to use the Eye of Insight.

One of the first generation of Awakened, she was nearing the time to use the Awakened essence for it.

Out of all the Awakened in existence, it is said that no stealth skill could go past her.

It was then.

“Chief! It’s 14:30. He’s about to come out.”

“Okay. Lady, we’re counting on you.”

“Oho. Of course.”

Finishing her reply, her expression turned serious as she casted the skill.

‘Eye of Insight.’

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(3)

The inside of the dungeon was quiet.

It was enough to make me question if this was a level 28 dungeon.

According to the intel, there were supposed to be thousands of monsters appearing.

But from what I could tell, it didn't seem that way.

It was as if the dungeon was already cleared.

The interior was similar to the manticore dungeon.

The difference was that instead of being a wide desert field, there was a winding desert road.

The width of the road was about 30m or so.

The floor was covered with finely ground sand, while the each side of the road stood wrinkly tress, their shells making a wall.

“Looks similar to a place I know, yet oddly different to it too.”

Finishing my monologue, I casted Mana Shield and shot forward.

Even after running for 2 minutes, I didn't encounter a single monster or any of their cries.

I didn't let it bother me, and continued forward.

Because it was normal as usual.

It was then.

“KWAACK”

“KRURU!”

The road was covered with my footprints.

Hundreds of monsters came out onto the road that I passed, howling and screaming all kinds of noise.

Dust Lizardmen, monsters with different sets of equipment and armor appeared.

Monsters that only do melee attacks.

Each swinging their weapons and surrounding their targets.

All of them possessed strength equivalent to a level 100 warrior. Quite troublesome to handle.

They looked similar to lizards.

1.5m in size.

They proudly showed off their reflective scales.

These scales were so tough that most magic could not even leave a scratch on them.

Not only were they immune to physical attacks, but they had a flat 20% magic damage resistance.

They were breaking the shifting magic and physical resistance pattern the dungeons had every 3 levels.

Kicking up a cloud of dust, they stomped their feet on the ground furiously.

However, Meteor Call had already finished casting in my hand.

Both Meteor and Iceberg had already hit level 159.

Thanks to these guys, these skills will become stronger.

A 10% reduction in cast time as well the cooldown.

To the mass of mobs that were staring at me, I casted Eye of the Storm to group up the mobs that were still spread apart.

Utility skill Eye of the Storm pulled in all lifeforms in the area together.

The level 100 skill didn't even cause the mobs to budge.

Those strong gusts, they stood still as if it was a breeze from a fan.

“Guess they’re high ranking?”

Both Heal Canceling and Lower Resist were the same.

Debuff skills did not work either.

The marks on the chests that appeared if the skills hit were nowhere to be found, after all.

Resistance was a major factor, but monster level and ranking were to be reckoned with as well.

“I’m curious as to see what will happen.”

“Take this!”

The size of the Meteor was enough to block out the sky.

With one swift movement of my hand, it collided against them.

The entire dungeon shook from the destructive force.

The massive shockwave from the noise rang throughout the dungeon.

The flames from the meteor was enough to consume even the very sands it blew into the air.

The hot winds from the destruction came towards me.

The remains of the meteor covered where the lizardmen used to be.

The flames continued to burn fiercely, and a message followed.

[20,000,000 experience obtained.]

.

.

.

[Level up.]

“Shit!”

I had barely taken care of half the monsters.

I had leveled up from 1/5th of my experience bar being full instantly.

Each monster offered 20 million points worth of experience.

And the numbers of monsters were not just hundreds, but nearly a thousand.

I heard that people leveled up all the way to 500 from this dungeon alone, but I didn't know it would be this good.

Even high level Awakened have to form up 5 man parties to get in, so they only get 4 million worth of experience per kill.

But I was keeping 20 million experience to myself.

Leveling in the level 18 dungeon, I was able to level up 12 times faster than the average Awakened.

But now I was running the level 28 dungeon that only one person was able to solo run in the entire world before.

Perhaps 20 times? Over even greater than that seemed possible.

I was overcome with goosebumps after confirming the sheer amount of experience I've obtained from them.

I was only surprised for a short moment though.

-crack

My Mana Shield was shaking with great intensity.

I was at least 30m away from them.

However, in a blink of an eye, they had caught up and were attack me.

If it was another shield, it would've come apart and the attacks would've reached me.

If these mobs had this much destructive force, they had to be taken care of immediately.

The reason why about half of them were able to survive was surprising though.

They had come together to form a defensive formation, blocking the damage of the Meteor Call.

That's why they were able to retaliate.

“KYAA!”

Their sharp beak like mouth had drool spilling out of them.

When the drool landed on the ground, smoke was formed, the scent of sulfur thick.

It was obvious that it was highly acidic.

“Don't spit at me!”

-CRACK!

A huge iceberg started to form, enough to swallow up the dungeon that was nearly 40m wide.

The ice broke apart and reformed nonstop.

Even as their bodies were being crushed and torn apart, the lizardmen continued to resist.

All the monsters I've met so far had been instantly taken out from the sheer amount of damage the Iceberg did, but these monsters...

I was able to reconfirm just how strong these monsters were.

[Iceberg's skill level rose.]

“Is it finally level 160?”

The cool down and cast time had become 1 minute each.

I was able to cast this destructive spell every 2 minute.

I used Holy Missile and Explosion to get rid of the stragglers.

The sand was painted in blood, the red matching the glow of the Bloodstones.

I collected all the stones and stood up.

I had to take down more lizardmen, after all.

Behind me, I could hear strange noises.

-crunch. -crunch.

“Ah! Right. The janitors.”

I turned around quickly to make sure I didn’t miss this strange scene.

Bugs the size of my fist appeared, eating away at the corpses of the Lizardmen.

Almost like how thousands of locusts eat away at the crops, they came in droves, attaching themselves onto the corpses like waves.

Covered in black, it didn’t even make a minute before everything but the armor and weapons of the lizardmen to remain.

Even dragging away the bones, they hid themselves into the sands once more.

“A lot more disgusting than I thought...”

The dungeon’s road seemed to be without an end.

I was curious what kind of ability Choi So-Hyeon had to be able to clear this dungeon by himself.

After taking down the boss, the exit gate appeared.

I was very thankful for one thing.

Other dungeons had the exit open up in the center of the dungeon.

To move all the way to the center in this enormous room was a task in itself.

Thankfully the gate appeared at the end of the dungeon.

“Wew. With just one run, I already leveled up once and have 77% of my gauge filled.”

It was a high class dungeon far beyond my expectations.

Before I left through the gate, I casted my Mass Stealth Jutsu.

-sha sha sha sha

Casting it above my head, the air shimmered and swayed, like a disturbance on a surface of a pond.

Including me and everything that came in contact with me were hidden from view.

If I didn't have Eye of Insight, I wouldn't know what I was holding onto.

“All right. Shall I exit?”

It was already 5 pm.

Maybe it was due to the dungeon being so bright, but the outside felt darker than usual.

I didn't have time to waste. I had to hunt some more.

I was about to use the ID scanner when...

‘Who are these people?’

The level 28 dungeon was famous for its rare visitors.

It was to be expected, as there were not many who could clear this dungeon as it was only possible to clear with a party.

However, the dungeon had roughly 40 people surrounding it at this very moment.

About 20 of them were equipped with armor and weapons.

The rest had clean uniforms, using hand gestures to communicate between one another.

I couldn't help but wonder what kind of a combination was this.

It was because I saw a granny staring directly at the entrance of the dungeon.

‘Seems like either the radical faction or the association.’

However, I could tell they were from the association.

It was because one of the people in the group was Se-Jin Kim.

I was focused on the grandma once more.

Yoon Jong-sun also had the look of a retired grandpa.

Most rankers had quite the age on them.

That grandma looking at this direction must also be very high leveled.

I felt that she was a cleric.

Because to see hidden targets, you needed Eye of Insight.

My monologue ended there.

The person next to the grandma spoke.

“Honored lady. It's about time that he would be exiting. Please give us the signal if you see him.”

“Yes. Understood. He doesn't appear to be out yet, though.”

“Not yet? Do you see anything?”

“Don't worry. My Eye of Insight is nearly level 100.”

“Of course. I trust you.”

‘What are you saying with me right in front of you?’

The bag on my shoulder.

In my hand I held my ID and the finger imitation.

I was sure that the cleric ranker could not see me.

‘Glad I Awakened my stealth skill. The essence wasn’t a waste.’

Should I just leave out of their sight?

No way. If I do that, they’d be 100% suspicious of my existence and dig deeper to find me.

Just in case the stones in my bag made a noise, I carefully moved my ID to the machine.

It was to make them think that the scanner was broken.

I was carrying out my plan to confuse them right before their eyes.

“Beep. Please present your fingerprint.”

Unlike how it was when I entered the dungeon, the sound from the machine felt much louder than before.

Hearing that noise, all 40 of them began to talk amongst themselves.

Then the man standing next to the elderly spoke.

“Lady! Is there anything at all?”

“Yes. I think you made a mistake today Mr. Kim. As you know, there isn’t stealth that I cannot detect. There is no one at the entrance.”

“No. Impossible! Please check it again. Lady!”

Ho Jin, filled with frustration, looked about despite not being able to see.

Then the elder spoke.

“I’m sure that the machine is faulty. Then shall we end it here?”

“Yes! Of course. Sorry for taking up your time despite your busy schedule, lady.”

“Ohoho. It’s enough that I get to see a young’un such as yourself,

filled with energy and rearing to go. Please take care of the rest.”

“Yes! Thank you for your hard work.”

The elder finished talking and was heading to the car.

Kim Ho Jin couldn't help but wear his suspicions on his face.

He continued to stare at the entrance of the dungeon.

Our eyes finally met.

He was staring at the dungeon, and I was staring into his eyes.

After a long while, he called his subordinates.

“Did you check the ID?”

“Yes, dept. head.”

“Yeah, who is it?”

“Yoon Hyun-se. Awakened date is year 01, month 03. Busan is his where his residency is.”

“First check the list of missing. Send a team over to check if the machine has a problem.”

“Yes. Understood.”

“If you find him, contact me immediately.”

“Yes!”

“Please present your fingerprint.”

While Kim Ho Jin was busy giving orders, the voice of the machine crackled out once more.

-beep

Without hesitation, I brought the fake finger towards it.

The dungeon entrance formed.

I didn't know who this ID belonged to, but once they found out the owner, it would be impossible to use it again.

‘Hm...’

Sending a text message to someone, I entered the dungeon once more.

Chapter 57 - Adding A Rhythm To Growth

After Kim Ho Jin and his associates left, I entered the dungeon without any issues.

However, when I tried to re-enter the dungeon by presenting my license, the machine replied.

-Invalid ID-

‘What?’

I tried once more, but the result was the same.

The ID was suspended.

‘They already suspended the ID that short span of time?’

I had predicted this ahead of time though.

Because the owner of this ID was nowhere to be found at the level 28 dungeon after all.

It was obvious that the ID would be suspended.

They also changed the identification machine as well.

Due to my ID being suspended, I could not hunt anymore.

I still had my ID with my name on it, but if I used this, it was the equivalent of me admitting that I was the one using the forged ID to enter the level 28 dungeon.

Even if I took breaks between the runs, the bugs would get in the way of using my talents fully.

That’s why the message I sent before entering the dungeon was to the midget.

I was planning to purchase at least 10 of these IDs.

The reason was as follows.

If I kept clearing the dungeon by swapping between the IDs and solo clearing, all the data sent would increase their suspicion and it

wouldn't be long before they suspend all my IDs.

They're already suspicious of this whole thing already.

The IDs would only be good for one use then.

Then instead of using them one at a time, by using them all at once, it'll look like I'm entering as a party.

My thoughts were interrupted.

A call from the midget came.

Instead of taking the call at the dungeon entrance, I used blink to get some distance before taking the call.

My stealth was not taken off as well for the same reason.

I spoke as quietly as I could.

I was using the Eye of Insight, but it was possible that there were others observing me without me knowing.

"Hello."

"Yes. What occasion would it be this time."

"Just as the message said."

"How many do you need?"

"How many can you get today?"

"Hm... As you know in this market, there's not enough money for all the goods out here."

"Then please get me 10."

"10?"

"Yes. I'll be there in 2 hours."

"Yes, yes. Understood."

He didn't seem very happy, and showed it in his reply.

Right before I hung up, I stopped myself and spoke his name once more.

“Ah. One more thing!”

“Yes. What would that be?”

“I need all the IDs to date before 2000.”

“Yes, that shouldn’t be hard.”

“Also make sure they’re all of different classes. That wouldn’t be hard, right?”

“Of course, of course. I’ll see you at the office in 2 hours?”

“Yes. I’ll see you there.”

The reason why I wanted variety in classes as well as the IDs to date before 2000 was that I didn’t want them to have suspicions if this was an actual party or not.

If the date was that far away, most people would’ve quite high in levels.

Even if they entered the level 28 dungeon, it wouldn’t be that suspicious.

After hanging up, I now had 2 hours of leisure time.

I knew exactly what to do with those two hours.

“Hello?”

“Yes. Hyung, it’s me.”

“Hm. What’s up?”

“Out of all the level 28 dungeons, can you find out which one has the greatest popularity?”

“Why? Did your ID get suspended?”

“Yes. About 40 members from the association showed up.”

“Guess they really have their sights set on you.”

“I’ll be counting on you.”

“Alright, I got it.”

“Ah! Hyung, could I meet with you in 1 hour?”

“Sure. But why?”

“Hm. I’ll be visiting you in an hour.”

“Sure. Call me when you arrive.”

“Yes.”

After receiving my phone call, Jong Ho went outside of his house to greet me.

Not sure if he was about to go hunting, he was wearing simple clothing that one would wear under their armor.

Recently, he’s been hunting from late afternoon till dawn.

Not sure if he has a specific reason for doing so, but it seemed that the group he hunts with seem to hunt at that time as well.

Seeing me, Jong Ho happily greeted me.

“Yo. Bro.”

“Hello, hyung.”

“What brought you here today?”

“Surprise gift?”

“What. Doesn’t look like much of a surprise with the expression on your face?”

“Wow....”

‘Oh boy. This guy.’

I gave him both Banwol Jincheon that I was holding with each of my hands.

“Use this, hyung.”

Hearing my words, his expression grew stiff.

And with a rare serious voice, he spoke to me.

“Why?”

“I’m going to the level 28 dungeon, so I have no need for a blade.”

“Do you know how much this cost? Do you know how many essences you need to purchase this?”

“Who said I’ll give it to you? I’m lending it to you.”

“Why? Why not hold onto it?”

“To use the ID and the gross fake hand imprints, I won’t have enough hands to hold the weapons.

And they could also make a lot of noise. It’s really annoying, so you should use them instead.”

Hearing my reasoning, a smile appeared on his face.

Guess he couldn’t hide it.

I mean it is a rank M/A Banwol Jincheon after all.

With the current B ranking weapon he was using, it was on another level altogether.

If you factored in the bonus strength stats the weapon provided, it was a weapon at least 5 times stronger than his current one.

With a face full of happiness, he asked.

“Can I really use it?”

“Looking at your expression, it looks like you’re already using it though?”

“Hey you! You’re supposed to pretend that you didn’t see it.”

“Since hyung is a dual wielding warrior, seems it met its master.”

“Yeah... It really is a surprise...”

“You do admit, huh?”

“I admit 100%.”

“Pfft.”

Jong Ho held both weapons with each of his hands.

I went behind him massaged his shoulder.

Jong Ho was confused and asked.

“What are you doing? Are you planning to end your life soon? Why are you doing this all of a sudden?”

“Come on, you’re going to have to stand tall and proud in front of the guys who are about to hunt. You’ll have to be ready.”

“Ah. That’s true. I guess I’ll have to warn them to not let their jaws drop too much.”

“Anyways, I met with you today to give you this. I’ll be going now.”

“Sure. Thank you. If you need it back, just let me know, okay?”

“Yes.”

The day I get back my Banwol Jincheons is the day I’ll be taking down Joker and the radical group.

After meeting Jong Ho, I headed to the office to pick up the 10 IDs.

As I asked, all the IDs were dated before 2000, and with a variety of classes.

Giving the price they asked for, I left.

I finally arrived at the Awakened market.

It was to purchase the skill I needed to ensure smooth sailing with my task of leveling.

“Please come in.”

The store assistant welcomed me with a stiff greeting.

“Do you have the warp skill book?”

“Of course.”

The assistant finished answering me and guided me through the store.

Out of all the skills books filling the store, the assistant brought a tall step stool to reach for the warp skill book way up above.

After using a smartphone to scan the skill book, the book was handed to me.

“It’s the Warp spell.”

“Yes. Can you ring me up?”

“Do you not need any other items?”

“Ah. Please give me Silent as well.”

Warp was a skill that most classes obtained as part of the basic skill set.

It’s a skill book with a 12 hour cooldown.

It made a gate to the location I wanted to arrive at.

I wish that it would let me travel back and forth, but it was only a one way trip.

But for someone who hunts for more than 12 hours a day, it was not a problem.

Silent.

It was a skill that made a barrier which blocked out all the sound around it.

It was to silence the ID terminal when I was trying to sneak in.

‘Guess I’m done preparing. Shall I go?’

Listening to the advice that Jong Ho gave to me about where the most populated level 28 dungeon is, I headed for Hanam.

I wish I could get there immediately using the Warp skill, but it only allowed the user to teleport to a place they’ve been before.

Guess I’d have to use the taxi this once.

I finally arrived at Hanam’s level 28 dungeon.

I could not see the regular crowds of people I was used to seeing

at the manticore dungeon.

All of them were from guilds or through connections.

Because it was a dungeon that was difficult to clear on just a whim.

About 100 Awakened members were outside of the dungeon, maintaining their gear.

With a party of 8 to 10 per group of course.

The level 28 dungeon was long and had many monsters.

A 10 man party took 1 hour to clear it once.

Most Awakened used up all their mana after one run.

That's why it would take so long to prepare for their next run.

I had to be hidden while using the terminal.

And not only did I have to use one ID, I had to use at least 8 along with the fake fingerprints.

If it was a low level dungeon that had many people constantly entering and exiting, I would never get close enough.

Stealth only hid my body, not turn me into a spooky ghost or something.

In front of the dungeon entrance, I casted Warp.

The Warp was connected to the midget's office.

I could connect it to my room, but it was safer to connect it to the office instead.

The gate that was spawned was the shape of a portal before it exploded.

But instead of being purple, it was blue.

Since the skill had a 12 hour cool down, I casted it to start the cool down early.

'Guess I'm done preparing to return home.'

From a corner far away, I casted Mass Stealth Jutsu.

Then I moved toward the entrance, looking around to make sure I was in the clear.

Because I could not progress if a group was ahead of me, getting ready to enter.

It would take a minute, but it was good to be sure.

Other than talking about gear or discussing strategies, they weren't doing much.

'Guess I'll go?'

I stood in front of the terminal, and casted the Silence spell.

It was a level 1 skill, but the range was quite far.

Even if the level was low, it should be able to easily block out the noise from this machine.

As I used the IDs, I kept a good watch around me.

'Because of all these bugs, I have to live like this.'

After that, I used the fingerprints.

Everything worked as planned, and I was able to enter the dungeon.

"Wew! I thought I was going to suffocate."

Entering the dungeon, I was able to complain aloud.

Since I didn't have to look out for prying eyes, I could relax.

It should be okay to talk in this isolated space.

With powerful skills in each hand, I charged forward.

Since this run was delayed for two hours, I tried to do it faster.

After killing all the dust lizardmen, I arrived at the end.

The boss was waiting for me.

Union Lizardman was its name.

Eating all the corpses of the lizardmen, and even running off with their armor and weapons, this was the boss of the dungeon.

The disgusting bugs from before, it was kind of obvious I guess.

They grouped up to form the shape of a giant lizardman, hence the name.

With the armor and weapons they've taken, they haphazardly put together this frankenstein of a monster.

The inside was filled with bugs that looked similar to water striders, controlling the mass of bugs as if a single body.

It was disgusting, but I had to face it nevertheless.

Because the armor they drop is amazing.

“Please drop this time!”

Chapter 58 - Adding a Rhythm to Growth (2)

The Union Lizardman was not a hidden boss, and appeared 100% of the time.

A boss that appears after defeating all the mobs in the dungeon.

That's why the chance for an item drop was high.

What I wanted to get was the Gauntlet.

Covered in the tough scales of the lizardmen, it was a defensive equipment with amazing properties.

It increased all magic resistances by 20%.

However, despite having a high drop chance in comparison to the hidden boss, this wasn't a dungeon that was open to everyone.

Only the highest rankers could clear this dungeon, or it was split between a party group.

The Lich King's armor set gave 20% magic resistance and 20% physical resistance.

In comparison, the Gauntlet only increased my magic resistance by 20%.

Even if it was dropping from a level 28 dungeon, it was far lower in quality than the equipment dropped from the level 23 dungeon.

However, the Lich King was a hidden boss. It could not even begin to compare with the Union Lizardman in terms of both offensive and defensive capabilities.

The lowest ranking Lich King was stronger than the Union Lizardman after all.

The higher level dungeons had greater amount of experience and lots of stronger monsters, but the items you could obtain from the boss were only affected by the boss's rank, not the dungeon itself.

Suddenly, from within the boss, a bone chilling noise was heard.

“....”

It was enough to give me goosebumps.

It sounded like a pot filled with cockroaches were fighting over food.

The bugs seemed to be susceptible to fire and electricity.

However, attacks like Glacial Field that had a frost attribute only seemed to slow them down, not causing any serious harm to them.

They really were like cockroaches, showing resilience in all types of environments.

With my hand raised to the sky, a huge Meteor Call answered.

Since time was of the essence for my growth, I had to take it down as fast as possible.

Meteor struck directly onto its body.

The weapons and armors stuck onto the mass of bugs fell apart.

If I wasted any more time, it would be able to recover its form.

I had to rip their core cells apart with powerful magic before they began to regenerate.

I ran towards the area where some of them fell apart to.

I had to immediately run toward the center and cast Fire Shock.

The bugs that fell apart were crushed underfoot, the sound of them popping continued as I made my way.

Each bug was weak.

They were being squashed like normal bugs, not monsters.

But as they grouped, they used their synergetic ability to obtain power and defensive capabilities.

That's why while they were blown apart by powerful magic, it was my only chance to cause some serious damage.

Within a 15m radius, the area was dyed in red flames.

A level 200 Flame Shock was being cast.

The flames consumed not only bugs, but armor and weapons made from condensed mana as well.

All within the range of the spell were removed from existence, almost as if they never existed in the first place.

It was then.

“Kurururu.”

“Guess you need to get hit one more time?”

The bugs that were blown apart began to regroup once more, reforming a body roughly half its original size.

I really wanted to cast Iceberg.

But their resilience was insane even within the spell, so it couldn't cause much damage.

To effectively damage them, they needed to be split apart, but Iceberg could not do that.

Thankfully, both the cast time and cool down of Meteor Call were 1 minute.

So it would only take 2 more minutes before I was able to use my powerful Meteor Call again.

Even if Meteor Call hit numerous numbers of bugs, I could only obtain a single use worth of the skill.

If each bug gave me 1 use of Meteor Call in terms of skill experience, I would have been able to hit level 200 in one go.

Thanks to my Meteor Call, it was completely annihilated.

A massive rank A stone appeared.

Since it wasn't a hidden boss, it did not drop a skill book.

However...

“Did it drop?”

I saw the form of the gauntlet, unaffected by the glow of the stone.

It was giving off jade-like glow.

And like the rainbow, each scale was emitting a slightly different color.

Even without the defensive capabilities, this gauntlet would be a work of art.

I stopped myself from admiring it for too long, and equipped the gauntlet.

Unlike how the exterior appeared at first glance, it allowed smooth movement without issues.

I looked up at the status window.

*All physical resistances up by 40%.

*All magic resistances up by 55%.

“Huh?”

It was supposed to be up by 60%.

There was a missing 5%.

“Ah. So they are split apart by ranks?”

The Lich King’s helmet and armor was from defeating the red glowing Lich King, so the item drop had the maximum stats possible for the gear.

With a sigh, I settled for less with the mid-tier gauntlet for now, equipping it.

All the other Awakened cleared the level 28 dungeon about 3 to 4 times on average a day, despite the dungeon staying open for only an hour after entering.

If an Awakened hunted for 10 hours, it would make sense that they clear it 10 times.

However, since that was not the case, it meant that it would take that long to recharge their mana.

Unlike them, I could clear the dungeon in 40 minutes, and continue to run without the need to rest.

Thanks to all the skills that were rising up in levels, I needed tons of Awakened Essences.

Now with all the Gauntlet drops I'll be getting, I could sell it for Awakened Essences, since no amount of money could buy one.

If the highest ranking one drops, I'll be wearing it of course.

Hunting, growth, and even gear could be obtained with this method.

It didn't take long for me to arrive at the exit portal of the dungeon with my backpack filled with goodies from the run.

It was annoying, but I casted Silent and Mass Stealth Jutsu before heading outside.

Annoying bugs could be waiting outside too, after all.

Since I could run into Awakened who could be trying to enter the dungeon, I made my body as small as possible before heading outside.

Oddly enough, it was quiet and still outside.

Almost as if the dungeon exit took me to another place altogether.

"... What the? Where is everyone?"

There were roughly a 100 Awakened here before.

But within the 40 minutes of clearing this dungeon, there wasn't enough half the number left.

And the remaining Awakened, instead of making small talk like before, were looking at their smartphone with serious expressions.

It was then.

The smartphone that wasn't ringing before due to the interference of the dungeon began to shake.

Missed calls as well as text.

It vibrated for about 20 times before stopping.

“What? I shouldn't be getting this many calls...”

My hand naturally went towards the smartphone.

Checking the message, I knew something big went down.

The message said the following.

-Emergency Situation—

Current time 21:32.

Near Hwaseong's Jebudo Island beach front, a level 29 portal explosion occurred.

All residents are to evacuate to the nearest Association building immediately.

All magicians in the area are to gather at the designated location.

Address: Hwaseong-si, Gyeonggi-do....

“....”

A level 29 portal and above exploding has never happened to this day.

All the portals that exploded so far were level 28, but there was a text that said a level 29 portal has exploded.

‘An earthquake out of nowhere, and now a portal exploding?’

A level 29 portal required at least 100 Awakened ranging at levels of 300 to 400 to clear it.

And since no physical attacks work on it, only magicians could do it.

However, since humankind can still handle a portal of this caliber, it shouldn't cause any severe damage before being cleared.

If it was like before in the past, I would've ran straight towards it.

A level 29 portal explosion would have massive rewards following it.

However, money was not of the importance to me at this moment.

And the area was far away from where I lived.

The chances of any damage reaching there was low.

“Hopefully they can take care of that stuff. Let's go hunting!”

-click.

-beep.

Hwaseong's Jebudo Island beachfront.

Countless warp gates were formed.

Answering the call from the association, these were from magician classes.

Since using Warp Gate required you to visit the destination beforehand, many cars were being used for those that have not visited the area before.

Since the portal's explosion was detected early on, the monsters have not crossed the waterline yet.

Awakened with levels reaching 100 showed themselves already.

Due to the massive reward?

No. If it was an Awakened with enough power to clear the dungeons of this area, it would be more beneficial to clear the dungeon rather than to show up for money they'd receive for responding to this event.

The reason why they still showed was due to their guild.

To clear the high level dungeons, or to get into stronger groups,

one would join a guild.

The guild didn't get involved in things directly most of the time, but they were still under control by the government and association.

It was a group made up of strong Awakened.

It was obvious that it needed oversight.

Guilds with 500 or more members were required to respond to national emergencies as requested with personnel.

Only the top 5% of the guild, the strongest they had to offer, were summoned.

The reason why they were set on a certain percentage was that the ranks of the guild determined how many members you could have.

500 members meant that it was a guild ranking in the middle ranges, rank 4.

Greater numbers weren't always a plus.

Each of them were complaining.

"Wew. I thought things finally calmed down."

"Yeah. And now a level 29 portal. This never happened before."

".... I don't know what's going on anymore."

That only lasted a moment.

The horizon seemed to be filled with black fog.

A huge horde began to appear, taking up the entire horizon.

The sky grew dark due to how late it was.

To take them down only using moonlight would be difficult.

The military shot out star shells to light up sky.

The area became lit for a moment, and the Awakened who made their stand around the light house and the breakwater became

much more nervous.

Towards landfall, monsters easily over the size of 5m were flying towards them.

In sync, they flapped their wings.

Over 500 in numbers, it was a terrifying sight.

One man amongst the group shouted out aloud.

Looking from behind the man, he seemed to emanate a powerful aura.

“You should not be afraid from just this!”

Chapter 59 - Unexpected Event. Portal Explosion.

“You should not be afraid from just this!”

It was shouted toward the group of scared Awakened.

The owner of that voice was the magician ranker Yoon Jong-sun.

His gaze was focused only on the flying monsters on the horizon.

Without any trace of doubt, he was both bold and brave.

It could be due to the equipment he had on hand.

The Awakened around him felt something else from him though.

The aura he brought with him was something special.

He was strong and sharp like a whirlwind, but gentle as the warmth of the sun.

Around him, two healer classes stood.

It was for attack and defense buffs, as well as support skills that helped him recover a small amount of mana.

Looking at this scene, the Awakened began to whisper amongst themselves.

It was as if they were looking at a celebrity.

A guy who would only show up on TV and news was on the scene for a level 29 portal explosion after all.

“Is it Yoon... Yoon Jong-sun?”

“No way... That can’t be...”

“I’m sure of it. It’s magician ranker Yoon Jong-sun.”

As if replying to the whispers amongst them, he turned around and spoke calmly.

“I’m not sure if this old man can be of any help, but let’s stop

them. It's for our family and friends back home."

"Ha... huh."

"He's the real deal?"

Words that seemed to belong in a novel.

The Awakened were astonished from confirming that this was indeed Yoon Jong-sun.

That only lasted a moment, as they gave out a fierce war cry. It was as if a thousand had rallied to their cause.

The Awakened assembled here did not come out of their own volition.

Even if they were the top 5% of their guilds, the level 29 portal monsters were a force to be reckoned with.

Each probably had their worries and fears about it.

A level 29 portal had never occurred before, after all.

But as soon as Yoon Jong-sun, a ranker that every Korean knew about, appeared, moral was through the roof.

Just from his words and presence alone, those around him regained their fighting spirit.

Yoon Jong-sun looked around to see those eyes that were filled with doubt now filled with determination instead.

With a smile on his face, he looked towards the monsters that were flying towards them.

His level wasn't revealed to the public, but it was estimated that his level was around 550 to 600.

Korea's representative top ranker, but he did not have a secondary class.

He had made his way to the top only with the magician class.

Due to the sponsorships he received from the corporate giants,

there was a time when he was labeled as corrupt, only seeking money.

However, he only used his strength to assist his nation and his people.

His righteousness was known by many Awakened.

The monsters flew with ferocity.

Their forms could almost be seen with the naked eye now.

Yoon Jong-sun's calm face seemed to show a small amount of dread.

Casting Silent, he spoke to the healers next to him on each side.

"These are not your average level 29 dungeon monsters."

Both of the healers who could not find anything special about these monsters flinched at his word.

They both looked towards the monsters, and could not hide their astonishment.

"Something is wrong. General, when we entered the dungeon with you, the monsters were different in size."

"That's right. It looks like they're at least 1.5 times bigger."

"It's going to be a difficult fight... Be prepared."

"Yes!"

"Yes general."

Canceling Silent, he turned around.

More than a 100 Awakened stood before him.

He could not let the moral fall.

That's why he had casted Silent so they could not hear.

Most probably never even entered the level 29 dungeon.

And even if they did hunt in there, they would have nowhere

enough experience to compare to Yoon Jong-sun.

Looking at them for a brief moment, he spoke.

“This old man is planning to take command... Will you follow me?”

There wasn't any who would disagree.

After all, the only hope they have of returning home safely was Yoon Jong-sun.

Taking their silence as agreement, he spoke to them again.

“The association magicians are delayed due to the Warp cooldown, and will be joining us in about 30 minutes. Let's hold on until then.”

An unprecedented level 29 portal explosion.

There was no way that the association would sit still.

Since no one knew what could happen at any given time, ranker Yoon Jong-sun did not use the Warp skill carelessly, always having it ready.

The Warp cooldown was 12 hours long.

And just like the Blink spell, it did not have a skill level, so the cooldown could not be reduced.

He kept it off cooldown to make sure that he was able to get to the places that needed his help promptly.

However, he was the only one who did so, as others did not have a heart burning with righteousness like him.

Unless the rankers were commanded, they only moved quickly for their own benefits.

“Yes.”

“Give us your command.”

“I'll be your shield, so please be my spear.”

“What do you mean...”

“As you know, the monsters that are coming towards us are gargoyles.”

“....”

“Out of all the monsters humanity has fought so far, it is the most difficult monsters for us humans to take down. If you allow them to attack, your bodies will become petrified, turned into stone.”

“Ha....”

The group began to nervously whisper amongst themselves.

Ignoring that, he spoke once more.

“The petrification occurs at a 50% chance, and even if you avoided that, their offensive capabilities are beyond your imagination. With your average health stats, it would be difficult to avoid being torn apart.”

“...”

“However, my Titan Boots will prevent the petrification. I will also be taking on all their attacks. If you could pour your attacks according to my command, then all of us can return home safely.”

“Understood.”

“Yes.”

“Sounds good to me.”

Finishing his little speech, his gaze returned back to the ocean once more.

And then.

“ORAAAAA!”

-ZAP!

As he raised his staff into the air, a powerful light powered out.

Suddenly, it was as if all the gargoyles were targeting only him, and rushed him accordingly.

The skill he had casted was called Crowd Clown.

It was an aggro skill that made all monsters within a large range only target him.

Almost half of the 500 gargoyles who were known as Mage Gargoyles began to pour their attacks on him.

-ZAAAP!

-CRACKLE.

Lightning bolts the size of soccer balls smashed directly into Yoon Jong-sun.

Quickly casting shields, he was blocking their attacks.

Both the healers also began casting buffs and shields on him.

Blocking their fierce attacks, he shouted.

“Frost! Use AoE freezing magic!”

-WHOOSH.

To his command, they all began to cast their spells.

Each had their own skills to use, but all of them were of the frost attribute, giving off a blue glow.

Waiting for spells that had a casting time, he made sure everyone was ready before giving the command.

“Toward the Mage Gargoyles in the rear! Now!”

Each time after clearing the level 28 dungeon, at least three text messages came out.

Using the data that was sent from the dungeon clears as a basis, the system determined who would be helpful to the cause, and sent texts accordingly to the target recipients.

It was the same for all the Awakened gathered here.

Those who were preparing to enter again had their phones constantly ring from all the message alarms.

The portal had exploded after 9PM.

It seemed that it wasn't taken care of, even though it was nearing 12AM.

Unlike the succubi portal explosion, which was taken care of in 1 hour, it seemed that a difficult battle matching the portal level was occurring at this very moment.

Finishing my 16 hours hunting, I headed towards the portal that I casted before.

Using Warp for the first time, I couldn't help but be surprised.

After I put my foot through the gate, I was sucked in.

In a blink of an eye, the surroundings had changed to the midget's office.

'Who knew it would be this useful.'

I felt stupid for not using it all this time.

At least the hunting grounds I went for weren't that far away from the dungeons.

Exiting the empty office, I grabbed a taxi.

It was to head home.

It didn't take long to arrive at home.

Mother was watching the TV in the living room.

"Did you come back?"

"Yes. I'm home."

"What about food?"

"I ate around there."

"Oh you. You should at least eat a homemade meal once a day."

Hearing my mother's nagging, which I didn't mind at all, my gaze went towards the TV.

It was about the level 29 portal explosion today.

Following my gaze, she spoke.

"No matter what channel I turn to, it's all about that."

"How is it?"

"Didn't you receive any texts?"

"Yes. It did come, but it was too far away for me to go..."

"Yoon Jong-sun or Yoon Jong-sun, apparently he's at the frontlines blocking the monsters. He's strong despite his age."

'Yoon Jong-sun... I met him at the dungeon where Louvier and Gwidon appeared.'

"Apparently since this is the first level 29 portal explosion, they're struggling."

"I see..."

"Go take a shower and rest. You worked hard today."

"Yes. It is late. You rest as well, mother."

Even after confirming mother returning to her room, I could not take my eyes off the TV.

After the portal exploded, high ranking officials were swiftly making their way towards the association headquarters.

Countless reporters surrounded them, camera flashes blocking their vision.

Kim Ho Jin's face appeared as well.

"People from the association, of course."

They had gathered at the association headquarters.

From the vice division leader to above him, all had gathered due to the portal explosion today.

The president of the association, Choi Man Seo, spoke to the man by the beam projector.

“Begin the briefing.”

“Yes. This is the first time a level 29 portal has exploded. Currently in the frontlines, Yoon Jong-sun is spearheading the operation. In 10 minutes, other ranker magicians should be arriving...”

Before he could finish talking, the president spoke with ferocity.

“Hey. We already know all that. I’m asking if there is any new information! If we don’t take care of this portal explosion properly, the association will be disbanded, and we’ll all be done for!”

“Yes. This is coming in from some of the association members who are currently deployed. All monsters that have appeared at Jebu Island seemed to be gargoyles from the level 29 dungeon, but seemed to be at least 1.5 times bigger in size.”

“What? Is this true?”

“Yes. Ranker Yoon Jong-sun agreed as well. It is accurate.”

“Oi, head researcher. What’s happening?”

The focus of the room headed from the president to the head researcher, who studied monsters’ weaknesses, ranked them, and came up with strategies to fight them.

Adjusting his glasses, he replied.

“I... This has never been reported before.”

“What do you even do? Do you want to get destroyed by the public?”

“There is one thing I’m suspicious of...”

The head researcher, after shrinking away from the president’s yelling, carefully opened his mouth.

Chapter 60 - Unexpected Event. Portal Explosion. (2)

Thanks to the unprecedented level 29 portal explosion, the association was in a state of chaos.

It wouldn't take much longer before the government representatives arrived as well.

Before the representatives arrived, they had to figure out the reason of the portal's explosion, as well as a way to deal with this.

Fire was around their feet.

Due to the association's president raising his voice, the head researcher continued.

"Something you're suspicious of? What is it?"

"That's... Did you ever hear of something called the Portal Erasure Test?"

"Isn't that a completely failed experiment?"

In the days when portals were first appearing. Roughly 3 years after the first Awakened began to appear.

While trying to research a way to eliminate the portals that grew stronger each year, this experiment came to be.

It was to have a lot of Awakened gather up their mana and send it towards the portal.

With condensed mana, they were supposed apply a physical force on the portal itself.

"Yes. While they tried to destroy the portal, it ended up only hastening the portal's explosion instead. A failed experiment."

"What. So what does this have to do with our current situation?"

"This is something I heard from the survivors of that

experiment. Due to the failure of the experiment, the portal exploded and the monsters that came out from it supposedly were bigger in size and had higher destructive capabilities.”

“... So this matches what Yoon Jong-sun reported?”

“Yes. That’s correct. However, after the failure of the experiment, the cleanup was completely classified, so not much information is available. This is only an eyewitness report.”

“Hm...”

Listening to the department head, the president of the association stroked his chin with a serious expression on his face.

If this explosion was achieved due to deliberate malicious intent, then this situation was going to get out of hand.

Contemplating for a while, he opened his mouth to speak once more.

“Everyone, listen up. What the research head said, not a word to anyone else. The government officials that will be arriving soon cannot learn of this.”

“....”

It was then that Kim Ho Jin of the Awakened special control unit stood up.

Even though everyone was busy trying to save their own necks and trying to match the president’s whims, he stood.

Staring directly at him, Kim Ho Jin spoke.

“What’s the reasoning? In this dire situation of all times.”

With a single phrase from him, he had everyone’s attention.

He had asked the one taboo question that no one was willing to ask.

Noticing the furious look on the president’s face, they stayed silent.

“Ah, department head Kim Ho Jin asks a good question.”

“....”

“Let’s say the portal was blown up intentionally. Who do you think would be behind that?”

“Well that would be...”

“It’s not like the local thugs got together and poured their mana into it! This situation, let’s not make it any bigger than it already is and just find a reasonable excuse! If you can’t find any reasonable excuse, just make one up! Understood, everyone? Just cover it up saying we have a special unit investigating it for now!”

“Yes.”

“Yes president.”

Finishing his spiel, Choi Man Seo stormed off out of the room.

The radical faction. Everyone here probably has the same idea.

But everyone in the radical faction were Awakened.

The blame would also fall the association, because it is their jurisdiction.

That’s why they were trying to cover up the truth with a simple portal explosion story.

To avoid the responsibility they were supposed to carry.

After the president left, Kim Ho Jin couldn’t help but lash out in anger.

“Damn it... You all are only good at taking care of yourselves, aren’t you?”

“Ha, the nerves of yours to say things like that. It can’t be helped.”

The people left in the conference room followed the orders they were given, and started to debate on how to explain the portal’s explosion.

It would be more accurate to say that they were making up the reason though.

They were making it up as they went, relying on the information the association hunters were relaying from the scene.

-CRUNCH.

“KWAAAAA!”

The gargoyles were in the middle of charging towards the breakwater.

However, the Mage Gargoyles in the rear were stopped.

It was because they were frozen from the frost magic attacks that over a hundred Awakeneds had cast.

Their wings and body slowly froze, each of them screaming in pain.

The countless magic attacks that were heading for Yoon Jong-sun stopped at the same time.

The gargoyles that used melee attacks did not reach landfall yet.

“ORAAAA!”

Yoon Jong-sun, who was only defending with the shields, began to cast offensive magic.

An orb in one hand, a staff in the other.

A spell materialized between them, and shot itself forward onto the frozen gargoyles.

“KU..KWUA.”

“KWUH!”

The sky colored in yellow by the star shells turned blue in a split second.

Like a huge rainstorm, countless frost arrows hailed upon them.

It was a skill called 'Frozen Shower'.

The mana cost was a massive 2500, but he was casting one on each of his hands.

It was only possible due to the mana stat he had, as well the weapons he held in each of his hands.

The weapons both raised the mana stat by an enormous amount.

Their bodies frozen and unable to move, they could only receive the full brunt of the attack.

It was as if hammers and chisels were chipping away at them, as the gargoyle's bodies were being broken apart.

Their final cries were only befitting of just how many monsters were gathered here, reaching all the way to the breakwaters.

If these monsters were regular level 29 dungeon gargoyles, at least half of them should have perished.

Because an A+ ranking attack was casted twice, after all.

However, they were at least 1.5 times larger than their regular counterparts.

They had received a massive amount of damage, but only a few had lost their lives.

Checking on the condition of the monsters, he muttered to himself.

"Guess I underestimated them by a lot. They aren't just big in size."

He was the Yoon Jong-sun, the one who had cleared the level 29 dungeon countless times.

While he didn't expect wiping them all out in one go, he at least thought he could take most of them down.

However the results did not look favorable.

Even after expending 5000 mana, he wasn't able to deal much

damage.

After he finished his attack, the healer next to him spoke.

“General. Most of the vanguard gargoyles are nearly here.”

“How much are you able to restore? My mana that is.”

“Even if we use up all our mana, we can only give you about 2 thousand tops.”

“Hm... We’re not even in a condition to cast shields, huh.”

“What should we do?”

“At that speed, the moment we retreat, this place will become a war torn barren wasteland.”

“Then...”

“We’ll have to hold. Reinforcements should arrive soon. We just have to hold until then.”

“Yes. I understand.”

Yoon Jong-sun turned to the Awakened behind him.

“Looks like it’s going to be a tough fight.”

Magic attacks from over a hundred Awakeneds.

Even with ranker Yoon Jong-sun’s attack, these monsters were not retreating.

The fighting spirit that burned in their eyes was changed to fear and despair.

“Are... are we going to die at this rate?”

“This is crazy. If only I didn’t draw the short end of the stick... Who knew level 29 dungeon monsters would be this strong.”

Each of them were talking with disbelief in their hearts.

The level 29 dungeon could only be cleared by a very small fraction of the Awakened, known as rankers.

They were not able to recognize that the monsters they were fighting were bigger and stronger than the average gargoyle.

They could only tremble in fear at the sheer power of the monsters.

Casting all those AoE skills, the mana expended by the Awakened was enormously high.

Despite being the highest level Awakened from their own respective guilds, it was difficult to cast it more than 4 times.

Yoon Jong-sun split the group in half.

He spoke to everyone on the left side first.

“This side, please cast shields on me. Use spells with the least amount of mana cost.”

“Understood.”

“Yes.”

“This side, when the mage gargoyles begin to thaw out, please cast frost magic on them once more. To take both ranged and melee attacks is too much to handle. Everyone who has nearly spent all their mana, please begin casting shields on me.”

“Yes.”

It was to make sure the mana was used efficiently.

The goal was to hold this location until the ranker magicians of the association arrived.

Even while as he commanded, many magician Awakened had arrived to assist.

Those who could not join immediately due to the Warp skill cooldown were finally arriving via vehicle transportation to provide aid.

As soon as he finished his explanation, the vanguard gargoyles began to attack.

Their sharp talons were ripping apart the shield easily. It was almost laughable how easily the shields tore away.

If the mage gargoyles attacked at this moment as well, both Yoon Jong-sun and the rest of the Awakened gathered here would be instantly wiped out.

“Uah.... Damn it all.”

“KWUAAAA!”

To add onto the dire situation where his mana was running out, the Crowd Clown aggro skill ran its full duration.

If the aggro he was holding was let loose, the entire line would fall apart.

Expending half of the 2000 mana he had left, he took the aggro once more.

Both healers that stood by his side were busy transfusing all the mana they had the moment it regenerated for them.

About 10 minutes had passed like that.

The number of Awakened that stood on the right side freezing the mage gargoyles lessened with time.

That meant that most their mana were used up at this point.

At this rate, it wouldn't take longer for the ranged attacks come as well.

Yoon Jong-sun's body was already covered in blood.

If he continued to use his personal shield spell, he wouldn't be receiving this much damage.

However, due to the limited mana he had left, he had allowed these attacks to go through.

His breathing was ragged.

He did not have any mana left at this point.

“Huff... Hu.....”

“General! You should retreat for now...”

“I’m fine. How are you all doing? Enough mana, right?”

To raise morale, he shouted, and in response the Awakened redoubled their effort on the skills they were casting.

It happened in a flash! All the gargoyles that were attacking were ripped apart.

“KWUAAAA!”

And so....

In the darkening sky, at the end of the breakwater, voices that one could only welcome were heard.

“Oh boy. Grandpops, that’s quite the burden you are carrying.”

“The old man is quite energetic.”

“General!”

“Huff.... Hu, you’re late even here?”

Finally, 40 members from the association had arrived as reinforcement.

As if on the verge of letting out his final breath, he sighed and welcomed them.

Out of the 40 Awakened, there were three that led them.

They were all magician rankers that ranked right below Yoon Jong-sun himself.

“Let go of the aggro, old man. Do you have a nice place reserved for you down in the afterlife or something?”

“Ah... Ahahahah!”

Saying some humorous nonsense and arriving next to Yoon Jong-sun was a man in his early 40s.

Yoon Jong-sun, despite his face being matted in dry blood, could

only laugh at him.

The new arrival looked towards the healers who were his followers.

It was a silent command to take away those who had received grievous wounds from the battlefield.

Both healers nodded their heads, and while supporting Yoon Jong-sun, began their retreat.

“Granny came as well, so make sure you get proper care.”

“Sang-Ho. I’m counting on you.”

Nodding his head, he casted the aggro spell identical to the one Yoon Jong-sun casted.

At the same time, two other rankers that came with him stood next to him.

“Mage gargoyle.”

“I’ll take care of those.”

“Good.”

“Then Hye Won-Ih, you and I will take care of these.”

“Yes. Understood.”

“Shall we get started?”

Chapter 61 - Unexpected Event. Portal Explosion. (3)

-CRASH!

“Damn it all to hell...”

“.....”

Joker had received the news that the level 29 portal explosion had succeeded.

His anger had reached its limit, and so his table was smashed apart.

His subordinate who came to make the report was shaking like a leaf.

From behind the curtain, he asked, filled with rage.

“Who was it... Ghost? Dark Lady? Who was the bastard!”

“It was Da.. Dark Lady.”

“AHHH! That bitch was able to make quite the impression....”

Joker’s rage does not subside easily.

All three leaders were to work on this project, as ordered by the head of the radical faction.

Dark Lady had succeeded in the portal explosion before him.

The only female leader in the radical forces, Dark Lady.

Her class was a tanker. And her subclass was an assassin.

Attack and defense. She had the perfect balance without any gaps.

Other than the head of the radical forces, she was the second strongest, following right behind Joker.

“The one.... Where is the location of the sun?”

“Th.. that’s... Supposedly he is at Incheon as of now.”

“Are you absolutely sure?”

“Yes. We were able to find out from spies that have infiltrated Dark Lady’s forces.”

“I see.”

The leaders fought against one another to obtain even the slightest amount of favoritism.

The group hadn’t moved for a while, but the boss claimed they would be soon. Finally, it was starting.

The boss had always visited Joker, for he had the greatest combat capabilities, but it was different this time.

After the portal exploded, he had headed towards Incehon, where Dark Lady was residing in.

“He went to meet Dark Lady....”

“Yes. That’s correct.”

“Come over here.”

“... Yes?”

“Come over here and clean this up.”

“Ah... Yes, leader.”

Joker spoke while pointing at his broken table.

Following his orders, the messenger headed through the curtain towards Joker.

The messenger’s eyes were already adjusted to the dark, but he did not have the courage to look at Joker’s face.

Trying to calm his shaking hands, he was trying to clean the debris when...

Joker’s giant hand grasped his head.

Joker whispered quietly.

“That glory, it should have been mine.”

“.... W-What do you mean....?”

“The glory that the Dark Lady achieved, it should have been mine. Don’t you agree?”

“Yes of course! It should’ve been yours, leader. The Dark Lady...”

Interrupting his rambling, Joker lifted his head to face him at eye level.

The messenger, now pale in color, looked towards Joker.

Almost as if his eyes were going to burst in flames, Joker asked while staring him down.

With a chilling smile plastered on his face to boot.

“What do you think the reason was for this glory that should have been mine being stolen?”

“That’s... All I can think of is that it was due to luck.....”

“Luck?”

“Yes! Dark Lady could have only succeeded on the project because she got lucky.”

Hearing his answer, the smile on his face fell, replaced with killing intent.

“Wrong.”

“T-Then what... KUWAK!”

-CRACK

Joke smashed the head he was holding onto into pieces.

The messenger was an Awakened.

But despite being an Awakened, his head was easily crushed like tofu.

Blood sprayed everywhere, and the air was filled with a metallic odor.

Joke tossed the limp corpse towards the entrance, and wiped the blood from his face.

And then he muttered to himself.

“The reason? That my luck was bad? AHAHA! Not funny in the slightest. I’ll tell you the correct answer.”

Opening his eyes wide in the dark room, Joker was staring at the headless corpse.

With huge lumbering steps, he headed towards it.

“It’s because of fools like you who are so afraid for your lives that you can only care about being tactful. Of course, you would be one of them. Or was.”

Underneath his feet, a darkish red aura began to form.

It was almost as if his rage was taking physical form at his feet.

However, this was a skill that the executioner class had, called Enhance Killing Intent.

Most skills the executioner class had were hand to hand combat oriented.

Out of those skills, Enhance Killing Intent allowed a portion of the body to turn into a weapon.

Almost like tenderizing meat with a hammer, he began to kick at the corpse that started to go cold.

“When you meet Jin in hell, look at him and regret on your existence. You would finally learn how pathetic you were.....”

“This is the location where the level 29 portal exploded, Jebu Island. The situation has been handled, and the surrounding area is being investigated. All Awakened guild members who participated in the fight are receiving protection from the association and are being escorted out.”

“Reporter Wang Seok-hyun, has all the monsters been taken care of?”

“Yes, that’s correct. Due to the association’s policy for safety, we were unable to capture any footage on the battle against the monsters. However, we can still see the how intense the battle was from the blood splattered all over the place. There are enormous corpses of monsters sprawled everywhere. These corpses are so disfigured, I’m having a hard time telling what they once looked like.”

“Is that so. I heard that there is much credit to give to general Yoon Jong-sun. How is his condition right now? Are the other Awakened safe?”

“Yes. Thanks to the quick response from the association as well as his brilliant commanding skills, all the structures and residents, as well as the Awakened are all safe and sound.”

“So they are.”

The scene of the battlefield changed to the studio’s desk, and the news anchor spoke while facing the camera.

“Can’t really put it in any other way. The credit goes to the amazing skill the Awakened from the association possesses. Thank you for all your hard work. This was the first time in history that a level 29 portal exploded. It is scheduled that the association will be releasing a statement of the reason for this occurring, what this could mean for the future, as well as their plans to deal with such possibilities should they arise. It’ll be covered at 8 o’clock on the special news report segment. Thank you.”

Today was Sunday. A day I did not go to hunt.

I had Jong Ho come over for a meal. We were snacking as we watched the TV.

The portal explosion incident that started at 9PM had finally settled down by daybreak.

After that, due to the association's influence, reports started pouring in as early as 7AM.

Without much concern, Jong Ho and I watched the news.

"Guess they stopped it somehow."

"Of course. Even if they are monsters from the level 29 dungeon, if the association arrives, they can stop it. 3 rankers were deployed as well."

"Well, I guess there wasn't anything for me to do there."

"But I wonder why the level 29 portal exploded. It never happened before."

"That's true. I was thinking about it, and I couldn't help but suspect that the reason is related to what I saw recently."

"The thing you showed me before?"

"Yes. Well, the association will be briefing about the reason of the explosion soon enough, so let's listen in."

"Jeez. Are you still believing everything that [idiot box](#) is telling you? Out of everything they say, you can't even trust 10% of what they are saying."

"I know that as well. Just wondering if they have any information on them."

"That's that but, how are you doing as of late?"

"About what?"

To my question, Jong Ho lowered his voice and whispered to me.

It was because he was worried that my mother would hear it from the kitchen.

"What do you think. Talking about the radical faction."

To his question, I responded by casting Silent.

Now this conversation between Jong Ho and I could not be

overheard.

No reason to cause pointless worry for my mother.

“Ah. Nothing at all.”

“After their last move, there hasn’t been anything else?”

“Yes. It’s so quiet, I wonder if I really took out Jin in the first place.”

“That just makes me worry more, you know?”

“That’s why I’m trying to get stronger as if my life depends on it. Because it does.”

“Of course. What’s your level now?”

“Going to be level 280 soon.”

“What? That’s insane. Weren’t you level 80 about 2 months ago?”

“Hyung. Isn’t this the difference between being determined and not? Difference due to how determined you are!”

“You sure it isn’t due to the difference in the ability we possess?”

“Well, that could be a part of it too.”

“Oh you. Ah! I forgot that I was going to give you this.”

Jong Ho began to dig through his pockets.

I was wondering what kind of new information he was going to give me.

“Surprise!”

“Huh?”

Going beyond my expectations, Jong Ho was holding out an Awakened essence.

On his palm it lay sparkling, as big as a thumb.

Raising his chin proudly, he continued.

“You know my personality doesn’t let me have a debt go unpaid.”

“But how did you get this? You hunt in a group. Did you kill them all and stole it from them?”

“Hey! Don’t say that nonsense. Thanks to you, I was able to hunt like never before at a time where I wasn’t even in a position to hunt, so I had a lot of time leftover. Lending amazing weapons such as Banwol Jincheon, the interest should at least be worth this.”

“You really killed them all, didn’t you?”

“To level up my skills that were falling behind, I ran the level 10 dungeon! You little shit!”

“Oh? Like how you explained before, you were farming for an essence?”

“Yeah. I did it for a whole week, but only one dropped.”

Since I used the last essence on the Mass Stealth Jutsu, I was at a situation where I had none left.

To heal all the fatigue I accumulated from the continuous hunting, I had used Heal to the point where it had reached level 100.

Other than Glacial Field and Formless Weapon Aura that I acquired recently, all skills had hit at least level 100.

What I needed now was to improve my defensive capabilities, so the correct choice seemed to be to invest my essence on a shield spell.

Lich King’s armor set as well as the Lizardman’s Gauntlet.

The reason why I obtained them was to increase my defensive capabilities after all.

However, compared to my amazing defensive equipment, all the shields I had other than my Mana Shield ranked only at a C rank.

The Reflect Shield that reflects attack at a certain % chance was already Awakened at this point.

It was too wasteful to use an essence on a C ranking shield.

“Hyung, can I really use this?”

“Yeah. I think at least until next year, none of my skills will hit level 100.”

“Ah, that’s right. You told me that you don’t have any skills leveled high enough to Awaken, right?”

“Yeah. I have a long way to go.”

“Then, even if it is very shameless of me, I’ll be using it.”

“You’re trying to be modest even after lending me 2 Banwol Jincheons? Don’t make me feel worse.”

I quickly took the essence off his hands.

Once again, I learned just how much of a bro he was.

I desperately needed not just the essence, but his capabilities as well.

I shoved the essence into my pocket, and asked him.

“Hyung. I’m trying to learn a new shield skill. What do you think would be good?”

“You already have Mana Shield, right?”

“This one isn’t for hunting.”

“Ah. Okay. Okay. Hmm.... It doesn’t matter if the skill is from a different class, right?”

“Of course. Doesn’t matter what the class is, I need a powerful shield.”

“Alright. A powerful shield is great. But you don’t have many essences to trade with, right? You could buy essences with money, but even with your stamina, you’ll probably find one or two more

who are willing to sell at best.”

“Ah... Right. Darn it.....”

I wondered if it was time again to visit the midget’s office again to borrow some.

I could just repay them later.

Then, an idea came to me all of a sudden.

“Hyung!”

television

Chapter 62 - The Best Merchant Kim Min-cheol

I had to obtain a powerful shield.

To do so, I had to get enough essences to purchase one.

While talking with Jong Ho, something came to me!

It was the Lizardman's Gauntlet.

I wasn't able to obtain the best gauntlet I could, but I had a few mid to high mid rarity gauntlets.

I could just sell these.

I went into my room with Jong Ho and brought the box sitting in a corner.

"Hyung. Do you think I can get some essences with this?"

Opening the box cover, Jong Ho couldn't help but be surprised.

Lizardman's Gauntlet could only be obtained from defeating the level 28 dungeon boss, and there were 5 of them in there.

His hands were shaking as he held them.

"What... What are all these?"

"What do you think they are? Lizardman's Gauntlets of course."

"Yeah I'm aware. Where did they all come from is what I'm asking."

"Guess they drop a lot more frequently than I thought?"

The rarity of the gauntlet was due to the low number of Awakened that could manage to clear the level 28 dungeon.

The actual drop rate from the boss wasn't that low.

The best one that could drop would offer me 20% magic resistance, but the one I was wearing gave 18%.

All the ones gathered in the box were of lower quality.

Jong Ho began to equip each of the gauntlets, noting the stats and resistances it gave.

Until you equipped the item, the stats could not be checked, so he was equipping them to approximate the worth of each gauntlet.

He put a post-it on each of the 5 gauntlets, and then he turned to speak to me.

“With this, it seems you won’t have to worry about the essences.”

“Really?”

“Of course! The lowest quality ones have a 10% magic resistance stat, but all of these have over 14%.”

“Okay. Let’s go sell them right away.”

“Firstly, we should sell the two highest ones at 16%, each under a separate ID and to make the deal in person. As for the other three, you should ask that midget friend of yours for help. If you put out so many amazing goods at once, especially 5 of them, it would draw unnecessary attention.”

“Yes. I thought they would sell for pretty penny, so I was collecting them. Are each of them worth an essence?”

“Looks like the average gauntlet offers 15% magic resistance, and go for 1 essence each. For the ones that don’t reach 15%, we could cover up the difference with money to receive the essences.”

“Wow. They’re worth more than I thought. I’ll have to start hunting again tomorrow, so let’s take care of this today.”

“Agreed.”

Since the item was rare to the point where none were on the market, it took less than an hour after putting it up on the trade website for tons of messages to arrive.

I already asked the midget to take care of the two 15% ones, as well as the one that is 14%.

Since the market had already set the price, there was no need to use any of the black market routes.

I just have to use two Awakened IDs provided by the midget to go vendor them.

The midget had already succeeded in selling two of the gauntlets.

The gauntlets we decided to sell on our own were worth twice in value.

It was only 1% higher than the average 15%, but the cost had doubled.

It was possible for us to get two essences for each gauntlet.

I almost felt bad for putting them in a worn out cardboard box.

And since this equipment was so rare to the point that it didn't exist on the market, some of the messages sent to us said they would offer up to 3 essences for each of them.

If I took my time and sold them by using basic market principles of supply and demand, I could probably get even more than that.

However, I could get more gauntlets as I pleased, and I needed a new shield spell as quickly as possible, so I settled on getting 3 essences for each of them.

“Hyung, should we use the midget's office as a trade location?”

“Do you like that place so much? I heard you even set the Warp spell there?”

“I dunno. It's just comfortable there.”

“Well, there is no reason to meet with them here and give away information on our personal lives. It's probably better to take care of it over there.”

“Then I'll go contact them right now.”

The clock was showing 4pm.

The sky could not ignore the change of season, and was already becoming darker outside.

I arrived at the office where the deal would take place, as well as the 3 essences the midget obtained from selling the mid-tier gauntlets.

Since I had to purchase the shield soon, I brought Jong Ho as well.

Jong Ho and the midget had already greeted each other over the phone. The information regarding what skill books to buy using the black market was passed on as well during the call.

We finally arrived at the office.

“Welcome. So you’ve arrived.”

“Yes. Hello.”

“I’ve only introduced myself via phone. My name is Lee Jong Ho.”

“Yes, yes. Glad to meet you.”

“The last one hasn’t been sold yet?”

“The buyer said they will be arriving within 30 min. For now, please take this.”

He went towards his desk and retrieved a check, as well as two awakened essences.

I thought that check was for the 14% gauntlet that needed some money added onto the deal to make it worth an essence.

However, the check I received was something I did not expect in the slightest.

Staring at the check in disbelief, I heard the midget speak.

“Well... the market price was set at one essence per gauntlet, but since it was such a rare item, the price offered was more than what we expected. The additional money we received aside from the essence as well as the extra money from the buyer arriving soon should add up to something, even if it's not worth an entire essence.”

“Oho...?”

The midget was acting completely different from what I knew him as.

Following my orders, all he had to do was give 3 essences as promised.

But he was trying to give me the extra money he received from the dealers as well.

“Is business going well for you?”

The midget couldn't help but be flustered at my words, and seeing the whole ordeal, Jong Ho couldn't help but laugh.

Disbelief couldn't be helped, as the midget I knew only cared about money.

But showing me a side of him like this, I couldn't help but feel awkward as well.

Perhaps ashamed, he gave a smile.

“Haha... That... They say even hatred is a form of caring. Our relations didn't start off very well, but in the hopes that our partnership will prosper, I was hoping you'd take his as an apology...”

“Well sure. I am benefiting from this partnership. And I'm sure I'll need a lot more from you in the future ahead.”

“Of course. That's true.”

“But.....”

He was trying to determine my mood.

His smile was replaced with a serious look.

“I won’t take this money. Please use this to cover some of the debts.”

“What... Didn’t you already repay all of the debt?”

“I’m sure there are a lot more than just me.”

“.....”

“As I said before, how about changing your occupation to being a middleman for trades? It makes quite the earnings, you know? And all three of you are Awakened.”

“I understand what you’re saying. The extra money will be used to clear up the debts of others.”

“Yes. Think carefully. With this much money, I think they could all be taken care of.”

I’m not trying to live like some nameless saints who donate massive amounts of money secretly, trying to pay off the debts of others.

It was because money held no meaning for me anymore.

But there was no reason to let others to suffer like my mother and I did due to money.

And I also wanted to give this midget another chance, since he didn’t seem like a bad person at his core.

Almost as if ventilating the heavy air the office was filled with, the door opened and the gauntlet buyer entered.

“I’m here to buy the gauntlet.”

“Hm... Guess we just have to wait?”

So far, 10 essences were collected from selling all the essences.

This was a lot more than all the essences I've obtained so far.

Just looking at how much essences I had, I thought I wouldn't need the mimic to reappear.

To think that I was able to get essences this easily with the level 28 dungeon runs that I could clear with ease.

After defeating the radical faction first, I thought it wouldn't be a bad life to settle down selling gauntlets for a living.

The wait didn't last long.

Both the midget and brawler class goon entered the office hurriedly.

"Huff, huff.... Here it is."

"Thank you. You worked hard."

The skill book was handed off to Jong Ho, who scanned it using his smartphone.

"While the cost was high, thankfully there are many of it readily available on the market."

-Iron Skin—

Usable Class: Warrior. Paladin. Brawler. (If obtained by other classes, the mana cost increases tenfold) Mana Cost: 10% of total mana

Skill Introduction: *A shield that absorbs damage appears.

*Attackers who hit the shield has a chance to become [immobilized](#).

*As the skill's level increases, the shielded amount as well as the duration increases.

*Able to defend against (???) ranking skills and lower.

Cooldown: 120 seconds.

Duration: 60 seconds. (Per 20 levels, the duration increases by

5%.) Skill Rank: Defensive rank S

Estimated Skill Book Value: ???

That was the information on the skill book showing up the smartphone's screen.

The reason why the cost was so high was because it was a skill that was used often by tankers.

No matter how many stat points you invest into HP, no tankers could last without shields.

Another important factor was that instead of consuming a specific amount of MP, it used up 10% of total MP.

Usually only offensive skills had % mana consumption, but it was different for Iron Skin.

It was a warrior class shield skill that consumed % of the user's mana.

So even a level 1 Awakened could benefit from the incredible amount of defense this shield provided.

“Whew. This cost us 5 essences?”

“It may look weak to you, but as it is an S ranking skill, it provides an insane amount of shielding. And the duration increases as you level it up too.”

“Hm... Let's say I reach level 200 with this. I guess there will be a 30 seconds gap that I will have to cover with another shield.”

“Yes. And we didn't get the other skill book today, but that skill book is a skill that could fill that 30 second gap.”

The midget's group spoke up.

“Um... Using Piercing Sword and Heal, as well as Lightning Spray... Are you a Third class?”

“Ah.....”

When I went into the dungeon to give these goons a good

thrashing, I didn't think ahead and just used a bunch of skills.

The Third class he was talking about was a class with two subclasses, having a total of three classes.

Jong Ho and I didn't even know of its existence before.

We only learned of it while investigating how Joker had a subclass.

They probably do exist out there, but not much was known about them.

Similar to the skills that were beyond ranking.

"Ah... Well, it's just that my mana regen is a bit fast. That's why I'm able to use skills from many classes."

"Ah.. That's why. It just seemed odd how all the skills you were purchasing up until now had class requirements that were all over the place. It made me very curious as to why."

Hearing his words, Jong Ho and I gave each other a knowingly smile as our eyes met.

It was probably because Jong Ho himself was tricked like this before as well.

With an amused look, I asked Jong Ho.

"What's the other skill you were talking about before?"

그로기| status: Due to shock from a heavy physical attack, the user is unable to move their body. A term used in the field of hand to hand combat.

Chapter 63 - Age of Chaos

It's been a week since the level 29 portal exploded.

After that incident, a level 28 portal and a level 29 portal exploded in a row.

This strange incident was occurring only in Korea, and thus all eyes of the world were on Korea.

All the areas where the portals were exploding were in the abyss of the sea.

Using the epicenter of the earthquakes caused by the portal explosions, they could trace the general location of the portal. However, finding the exact location still proved to be difficult.

Currently, the International Awakened Organization had made plans to hire professionals to assist in the investigation efforts.

40 years ago when the monsters first appeared to the present time, many nations fell to the monsters.

Most countries did not last the first two years, disappearing into the chapters of history.

Currently, only 80 countries remained, and most of them were in the International Awakened Organization.

The organization was able to do its job starting 12 years ago when the portal explosions stopped at the level 28 dungeon.

The goal of the organization was to research on the portals and monsters, and to prevent further damage against the monsters that have taken over those fallen nations.

They also used the bloodstones and item drops obtained from the monsters to convert them into a source of energy.

The Portal Erasure Test project was rushed into action by the organization, as each of the nations contributed.

In a week, the members deployed from the organization would be arriving here.

They'll probably form investigation teams and start searching for the reason of the explosions.

If a situation like this occurs, all the nations would not hesitate on using all their resources to help out, as the situation could go out of control and turn into a massive crisis that could affect them as well.

At the same time.

President of the Awakened association Choi Man Seo called all the department heads.

It wasn't to provide assistance to the organization, but avoid taking the blame for the incident.

The reason was the following.

Each nation had their own radical faction that disagreed with the way the government ran the nation, dreaming about unrealistic ideals instead.

However, there wasn't such a deeply rooted radical faction as the one in Korea.

The world suspected that it only came to be like this because of how corrupt the government in Korea really was.

After the Central Plant Center exploded, many terrorist attacks followed, but none caused any serious damage.

Without treating the infection and thinking that it'll just heal on its own, many years had passed.

If the radical forces are to blame for these explosions due to them stepping up their game and they are not stopped, it was obvious that Korea would be expelled from the International Awakened Organization.

Since this group was a threat against humanity, the nation of

Korea that harbored them would be completely cut off and isolated, rotting away until its complete disappearance.

And if the radical faction still was a threat against the world, brute force would be used to destroy this small little country.

The president of the association Choi Man Seo spoke.

“I’m sure everyone is already aware of this, but within a week, members from the IAO will arrive.”

“.....”

“....”

“But here is the thing. If they find out the real reason for the portals exploding, what do you think would happen? Oi. Department head Kim Ho Jin. Been looking gloomy for a while. What do you think?”

The president as well as subordinates already knew that the culprit was the radical faction.

However, instead of discussing it with the government, they were too busy keeping it all hushed up.

To his question, Ho Jin replied with the same disapproving frown as he kept his stance on the matter.

“If the tooth is rotten, you can still pull it out!”

“As expected. If people like you were born earlier in the past, you would’ve left quite the name. But you won’t live for long. There’s even an ad about this. How when everyone says yes, you are the type of person to say no.”

“President, you already know how big their group is! If you say nothing and try to keep this silent, this will blow up into something huge...”

“Enough. Find the portal location within a week. And write it on the report that you’ve taken down some of the portals around the area. Understood? Right now, the citizens of Korea are praising the

association that contained 3 portal explosions. Don't go ruining it for us. Do you think I'm the only one covering my eyes and ears to live?"

"Then what will you do when the radical faction comes to attack us? 6 years ago after the attack on the Center Plant Center, the attacks from the radical faction continued, and it wasn't just a few cases! At this rate, we will be kicked from the International Awakened Association without a doubt, and it'll only be a matter of time before this nation is destroyed not by monsters, but by war."

"Hold up. Did I hear that correctly? Radical what? Radical Faction? Does anyone here know what is this Radical Faction he's talking about?"

To the president's inquiry, everyone rolled their eyes about and remained silent.

Jumping up from his seat, he charged Choi Man Seo as if to kill him.

"Do what you want! You disgusting figurehead!" 1

"Oh ho! Take this bastard away immediately! Do you think that mighty radical faction only exists in this small little country like Korea? Stop acting out when you don't know anything at all. What are you doing! Take him away now."

As the Awakened guards were dragging Ho Jin out of the conference room, he did not stop cursing out at the president.

Because he knew that this situation with the radical faction only came to be due to people like the president taking care of situations like this.

"And you call yourself the president of the association! It wouldn't be a stretch to call you a subordinate of the radical faction! I'll get you for this, and you'll pay!"

"Well aren't you out of your mind. Really giving out your

resignation statement spectacularly. Get rid of his desk immediately, and have people supervise him so that he can't even as much as squeak! Everyone, you understand what I said today, right? Let's stop for today. One week. Forget about going home and focus on getting this resolved quickly."

"Yes...."

Department head Kim Ho Jin's furious yelling could be still heard clearly, despite being too far to be loud anymore.

"All of you in there are the same, you bastards!"

"Dark Lady...."

"Yes, master."

"So you did it. I thank you for your loyalty."

"You humble me, master."

"I asked Ghost to find a portal that's level 30 or above. Once the portal is found, you can proceed without any issues, right?"

"Of course."

"Good.... Thanks to you, that day can come a little bit quicker."

Radical faction's boss. Master Zekill.

He commanded all three of the leaders to gather at Incheon, where Dark Lady ran the city in order to formulate a plan for the mass chaos would be ensuing soon.

He planned to have the currently government collapse, and did not hesitate on his goal to raise a new rule.

The strong obtains power and political control, and rule over the weak.

His first goal was to blow up the portals, because that would cause the expulsion from the International Awakened Organization.

If that happened, no one would care if this country is taken over or devoured by them.

A complete isolation from the organization.

After that, it would be time to take over the entire country and use it as a base of operations to increase the strength of the radical faction around the world.

“Joker.”

“Yes, master.”

“Lend Dark Lady your strength.”

“Yes... master.”

Joker was the best of the three leaders before, but now having lost his spot, was seething in rage.

It was fact that he wasn't getting recognized by the boss. And now he had to role of being a support for someone who was weaker than him.

Looking downwards, he briefly paused to calm down.

However, it was interrupted by Zekill speaking.

“I heard of a strange rumor.”

“What would that be...”

“I heard that Park Hyun, one of our financial backers, died due to a single Awakened. Is that true Joker?”

“Yes. That is the truth. He had quite the ability, so I tried to capture him, but since he fiercely declined the offer, I already took care of him.”

“Is that so.”

Joker lied to hide the fact that he was trying to use Min-Cheol, who had infinite mana, for his own use.

He could reveal Min-Cheol's existence to him right now, but

since Dark Lady had succeeded in the portal explosion, it would look disloyal if it was found out that Joker had tried to do this on his own.

There was nothing to gain from speaking up.

He swallowed his saliva as Zekill continued.

“One month. Within one month, everything will change. We’ll be in the center of it all. For that day...”

“Yes, master.”

“Yes, master.”

Finishing, Zekill hid from view once more.

After that, Dark Lady went towards Joker and started to taunt him.

“You heard what the master said, right?”

“.....”

“I think I need more mana. Send 200 magicians to me, Joker.”

“You little bitch, running your mouth without any concern. Dark Lady....”

“Pffft. So, it seems the rage of a male lion chased out from his own pack isn’t anything to be afraid of.”

“... I’ll follow his orders. But soon, you’ll regret saying those words.”

“I’ll be looking forward to it, Joker Gen-er-al~.”

Leaving the room, Joker began to quietly murmur to himself.

“Seems... Seems my only option is that boy.”

“Whew. Finally all that tedious hunting is over. But why is my ear so itchy? Is someone talking about me?”

For me who had been only focusing on growing stronger

physically, something more important happened.

It was selling the Lizardman's Gauntlet each weekend.

It wasn't for the money.

For a magician class, more important that their physical prowess was the skill level of their skills as well as their MP amount.

This wonderful, amazing essence maker was enough to get rid of the stress of Awakening the skills I possessed.

It was too wasteful to Awaken a C ranking shield?

It was true that I used to think like that up until recently.

It only took a few hours for me to realize that it was incorrect.

It was a week after selling the 5 gauntlets.

The amount of essences I had never fell below 5.

Other than the Frost Orb that I got at level 1, all shields, buffs, and debuffs were already Awakened.

The moment they hit level 100, I immediately Awakened them using the essences.

No matter how low the skill ranking was, by Awakening them and leveling them enough, both the destructive capability as well as the usefulness was ridiculous.

For example, I could use Lightning Spray again.

It really shined on low level dungeons, but as dungeon levels increased, it didn't do much. However, after Awakening it, it succeeded on causing small amounts of damage to even level 28 dungeon monsters.

And the monster was a lizardman, who boasted almost unfair amounts of physical and magical resistances.

"It wouldn't be that bad to become an essence collector."

I obtained Iron Skin, as well as the other skill that Jong Ho

obtained for me.

Both were S ranking shields with the same cooldown and duration.

The one difference was that while Iron Skin could possibly cause the enemy to become immobilized, the new skill Holy Block inflicted holy element damage, which was hard to defend against, even with high magic resistances.

Of course, it had a low chance to activate the secondary effect.

Let's say that I use three of these shields at the same time.

Then my attackers could be hit with the reflected damage, immobilized, and holy elemental damage.

At least one of the shields would activate its secondary effect.

I thought that my Mana Shield was everything I needed, but I was pleasantly surprised at these shields that I never knew existed in the first place.

My level was now nearly 300, and my main attacking spells Meteor Call and Iceberg were nearing level 200.

The cooldown would be zero.

‘Have you seen a hunter who spammed Meteor without a care? That's me.’

Chapter 64 - Enemy? Ally?

Hot air blew, matching the desert like theme of the dungeon.

Meteor Call and Iceberg no longer had cooldowns.

The floor of the dungeon was covered in flames.

If there was one thing, I was kind of disappointed with what happens when I used both skills together.

When both skills met, they cancelled each other out entirely.

It dealt no damage.

But that didn't really matter.

As long as I continued to cast one of the two skills repeatedly, all monsters would be completely wiped out without any traces left.

The clear time of my hunting was fast enough as it was, but now it became incomparably faster.

I could pretty much clear the dungeon in the time it takes me to run to the end of it.

This clear speed could not be reached even with a 10 man party.

I loved this growth speed, but it worried me that the association would catch on again.

Without any time between each run, they would become suspicious of this party.

The solution I came up with was to purchase a ton of IDs.

I categorized each ID by class and level, dividing it into 4 different groups.

Each time I ran the dungeon, I swapped these four groups around.

With this, they would not become suspicious from just the data alone.

‘Guess I studied hard to come up with great schemes like this.’

Two days ago.

I went to the level 13 succubus dungeon to meet up with Jong Ho.

This was where I met him in the first place.

The level 13 portal that exploded then had become a dungeon, a treasure trove that filled the bellies of the Awakened.

Back then, it took 30 minutes borrowing Jong Ho’s car to get here from the restaurant.

It was an unlit hiking trail before.

However, now the area had restaurants and stores.

Parking lots were a given, and they even had a specific zone for the warp gates.

“Wow. It used to be just a hiking trail with nothing of note... but it developed like this.”

The surrounding area had changed to the point where I couldn’t even recognize it anymore.

Jong Ho and his party group were walking out after clearing the dungeon.

Including Jong Ho, the party consisted of 6 members.

Out of them all, it couldn’t be helped that Jong Ho’s weapons and armor were sticking out like a sore thumb.

In each hand was a Banwol Jincheon, as well as an emerald Lizardman’s Gauntlet that covered his wrist.

Ah. The gauntlet was a gift to him in repayment for all the gauntlets he helped me sell each weekend.

I already had obtained a gauntlet that gave me 20% magic resistance.

That’s why I gave him the one I was wearing before, which gave

18%.

True to his character, he did not put it on until I said I was 'lending' him the gauntlet.

Looking from the outside, he looked like a tanker that was running the dungeon to help the other members level up.

I called Jong Ho, who was busy selling the loot after the hunt.

"Hyung!"

"Yo! Bro."

"Armor suits you a lot better than your regular clothes."

"Do you have to laugh while saying that?"

"I can't cry though. Do you go on dinner dates while dressed like this?"

"Can't help but laugh thanks to you."

I went towards Jong Ho, greeting all of his party members that hunted with him.

"Hello. I'm Jong Ho hyung's [dongsaeng](#)."

"Nice to meet you."

"I heard many things about you. My name is Hee Park."

While I was greeting everyone, a man I was familiar with came into view.

A man in his mid 40s.

He was looking at me, with the faintest of smiles on his face.

A man who seemed too old to be running a level 13 dungeon.

Most people become Awakened before they hit their 20s.

Most people gathered here were in their early to mid 20s.

'Did he Awaken late?'

Well, there are cases like hyung who was doing managerial work

until Awakening late.

This wasn't about when he was Awakened, or what his appearance was like.

It was because I felt like I saw him somewhere before.

‘Where did I see him before....?’

Jong Ho finished dividing up the loot, and was ready to leave.

Saying farewells to the party members, we distanced ourselves from the group.

‘Silent’

I wasn't sure what was happening, so I casted a spell that prevented us from behind overheard.

“Hyung. Who is that man in his 40s?”

“Ah, someone I've been hunting with for a week. Why?”

“I have a feeling that I've seen him somewhere before...”

“He said he used to work for the association. You sure you're not confusing him with someone who looks similar?”

“No. It's definitely someone I know. I'm sure of it.”

“No way. It doesn't look like he knows you.”

“.....”

Wait, Ho Jin?

That was when I remembered his name and face.

Department head of the Awakened special control unit, Kim Ho Jin.

I was sure of it.

He was the one who brought all the association hunters, as well as the cleric ranker to wait for me.

No. He was trying to catch me.

‘What is this. Are they hiding around here?’

My head was filled with possibilities.

A member of the association was clearing a dungeon.

And since he was able to go in and out of the dungeon as he wished, it meant he was an Awakened.

‘An Awakened that works at the association? That’s something mothers would be bragging about to others about her son.’

It was someone I could not understand.

“You said he used to work at the association?”

“Yes. He didn’t go into detail about it, but he said he quit due to a quarrel with his boss.”

“Hyung. Remember how I told you that I wasn’t able to hunt for some time thanks to all those hunters from the association showing up?”

“Yeah, that’s when your fake ID got suspended, right?”

“Yes. The man who is responsible for that is Kim Ho Jin.”

“What?”

“I’m not sure either on why he’s here right now. It could be that he approached you on purpose because you have a connection with me, or it was a coincidence while he was trying to live the life of an Awakened after quitting the association.”

“What, seriously. Just what is happening?”

“I think he also recognized my face.”

“Of course. Just by looking up your ID, your face would come up.”

“Yes. But back then, I was stealthed, so there is no way he can recognize me. I think I’m just paranoid, thinking that he recognized me.”

“What should we do? Should we change the party members?”

“No. If he left the association completely, he should have nothing to do with me, but if he didn’t, then doing so would only make him more suspicious. Just hunt with him like you usually do.”

“After that?”

“Just hunt as much as you can.”

“What?”

“Until I find out his identity and what’s really going on, please act normally as you usually do.”

“How will you find out? How can you reveal his agenda?”

“I can stealth. Even if it slows down my hunting, I need to find out.”

“Alright. For now, I get it. Fate really is fickle.”

“If he really did leave the association.....”

Leaving the conference room, Kim Ho Jin was cursing and swearing all sorts of profanities while heading to his office.

This act of corruption by his superior happened right before his eyes.

He couldn’t just stand there and watch the president lead the country down a path of ruin.

Those who worked with him gazed at Ho Jin.

However, he was quietly packing up his belongings in silence.

“Greedily taking tax money from the country. But if you are too busy only caring about your life, how can this country run properly!”

27 years ago. He had Awakened at the age of 18, just like Min-cheol did.

However, instead of wanting to live a cozy life, he decided to become a member of the association.

This was before the radical faction showed, and a time of recovery after the attacks of the portal explosions occurring all over the place.

You could say that mankind was finally stabilizing towards peace after the attacks from the monsters paused.

On the other side of the coin though, the Awakened began causing trouble all over the place, to the point where they could not be handled.

It was because there was no laws clearly set for Awakened, as well as a way to enforce those rules.

This was why he thought he needed to join the association.

It didn't take him long for him to pack, almost as if confirming that those 20 years were worth nothing.

Half of his entire life was spent dedicated to the association.

But he let go of his title without any hesitation.

The only thing he could do now was to grow stronger.

It was late, far too late for him to trying growing strong enough to fight against the radical faction.

But he couldn't just stand by and do nothing.

He couldn't just watch his country and humanity as whole be slowly destroyed from the inside out any further.

Before going out on his first day of hunting, an idea that had come to him hundreds of times over came again.

Telling this juicy story to those crocodiles in the swamp, the reporters of the press.

He wanted to tell the truth.

To the entire world.

But, for someone who has been in the association for 20 years, there was no way they weren't aware of all the dirty work they do behind the scenes.

He knew that whoever they put on him for surveillance would get rid of him the moment he did anything rash.

If he was the only one who'd suffer, it wouldn't matter.

If that was the case, he could accept the consequences of doing so.

However, thinking about his wife and daughter, he couldn't bring himself to do so.

"I'm just the same as them, looking out for my life... How pathetic of me....."

And so a week had passed hunting.

In between his association work, he leveled whenever he could, reaching level 85.

Well, for someone who has been Awakened for 27 years, he was a very low level.

He was hunting at the level 13 dungeon that was appropriate for his level, forming up a party.

His hunting for the day was nearly finished, and that's when it happened.

"Hyung!"

"Yo. Bro."

He couldn't believe his eyes.

It was Kim Min-cheol.

The person who, within two months of being Awakened, clearing dungeons of great difficulty and level by himself, had appeared before him just like that.

It appeared as though he was friendly with Jong Ho, who had

first approached him to form a party together.

He couldn't help but smile.

'A man of that caliber..... He might be able to change the world.'

Of course, he didn't know much about him.

He could be part of the radical faction.

But it felt as though he was the only hope left he could bet on.

'Who are you, Kim Min-cheol.'

'Mass Stealth Jutsu'

Pausing my regular hunting routine, I began to spy on Kim Ho Jin.

I already had learned of his address by following him back on the day we met at the level 13 dungeon.

If I used Silent and Mass Stealth Jutsu, I should be able to get the information I need without being exposed by anyone.

"Where is the entrance to the girls' onsen... just kidding. I think it was the 3rd floor of this apartment."

-click

I finally caught him, just as he was about to leave for work.

I was going to watch him for a while, but if he headed for the association right now, that would mean that he approached Jong Ho and me on purpose.

As Ho Jin was putting on his shoes, his spouse spoke.

"Whew. You are old now. You should just rest at home."

"I'm a little restless, you know."

"Even after marriage, I don't see you staying at home even once. Well, do take care. Keep your promise to stay here at least on the weekends! Jeong-yeon, you should go say bye to papa, right?"

“Daddy. Bye.”

“Haha. Alright. I’ll be heading out now, honey.”

‘Hmm.... Did he really leave the association?’

The reason why I was interested in him was for the information he possessed.

Jong Ho was very knowledgeable in monsters, hunting, dungeons, and the loot dropped.

Unlike him, Kim Ho Jin had stayed in the association for a long period of time.

If I was able to obtain information regarding the radical faction and the government, it would be like obtaining a thousand units for reinforcement.

That was a good reason to keep him under surveillance for a bit longer.

‘Kim Ho Jin, who are you?’

little bro, term of endearment in this case, not actually blood related

Chapter 65 - Ally? Foe? Ally!

Report of Kim Ho Jin after 5 days of surveillance.

-06:30 Wakes up.

-After waking up, feeds pet: Dumpling. (Not very cute for a dog.)

-07:20 Personal care before leaving. (The type to eat breakfast no matter what.) -07:30 Says goodbye to daughter Kim Jeong-yeon and wife before leaving. (Wakes up earlier than expected. Guess the entire family is one of those morning people types.) -08:00 Arrives at the level 13 dungeon to find a party to join.

-Afternoon. Until Jong Ho and his group of members arrive, tags along with other Awakened who seem decent enough to hunt. (Hunts for over 12 hours, like I do. Seems he has some goal in mind.) -20:00 Finishes hunting, returns home.

-22:00 Sleep. (This looks more like how a soldier lives.) “What the. Did he really leave the association?”

Too much time had passed to call it a vacation period given from the association.

It was nearly 2 weeks since he had hunted with Jong Ho, after all.

Eavesdropping on Ho Jin and his wife, I was able to confirm that he really did quit.

While I was keeping up surveillance on Ho Jin, Jong Ho informed me that Ho Jin asked about me.

Following my instructions, Jong Ho avoided the questions by changing the topic or made up stories about me as needed.

For very specific personal questions, he just replied that he didn't know.

From what I've seen so far, Kim Ho Jin appeared to have left the association and was living the life of an average Awakened.

That's why today, I'll be appearing in front of him.

It was for the information I wanted from him.

And it seemed that he was hoping for me to appear before him anyways, so there was no reason to delay.

The hunting was finished deep into the night due to the delay cause by the surveillance I kept on Ho Jin.

Obtaining information and an ally is important, but growing stronger took priority.

Like keeping a knife sharp, I kept up my daily hunting routine to the dot.

After a short nap, I headed towards Ho Jin's house so I can meet him as he left for his daily hunting.

I could see him leaving his apartment.

-beep

He was walking towards a white SUV.

'Why is an Awakened using a vehicle to get to the hunting grounds?'

I myself had used a similar method until recently, but he could just use the Warp skill to get there.

Ho Jin stopped walking towards the vehicle, and facepalmed.

A monologue followed.

"Ah. I'm out of it... This is why habits are scary."

"Mr. Kim Ho Jin."

While he was looking blankly at the vehicle, I went towards him and spoke.

Turning his head to where he heard the voice, he didn't seem that surprised seeing me standing there.

But hiding his expression again, he played stupid.

"Who...?"

“It’s Kim Min-Cheol. We met at the level 13 dungeon before.”

“Ah! Now I remember. Sorry about that. My memory isn’t the best. What business brought you here, I wonder...”

“We also met at the level 28 dungeon, right?”

Seeing my smirk, there were beads of sweat running down his face.

“Huh? Haha... No way. Since I Awakened later than others, I’ve just started to run the level 13 dungeon, you know?”

“Drop the acting please. You don’t seem to have any talent in doing so. Don’t have time to waste either.”

“W... What do you mean...”

“Sorry to say this now, but I’ve been watching you for the past few days.”

“....”

“Let’s change locations. Looks like a fly is amidst us.”

Looking through the Eye of Insight I casted beforehand, I was able to find someone using a stealth skill to spy on us.

The radical faction?

No. There was no way that they’d put someone as green as this person to a target that had taken out Jin.

Probably to keep tabs on Kim Ho Jin.

Perhaps he had also noticed, because he nodded his head and followed me to the alleyway next to the entrance of the apartment complex.

Turning the corner to get out of the line of sight of the spy, I casted Mass Stealth Jutsu and Silent.

The range was enough to cover both Ho Jin and me.

“Now we can proceed. Let’s continue talking. What do you want

from me? Why are you trying to find out about me?”

Ho Jin let out a heavy sigh, and then began to speak with a serious expression.

“Whew... Before I answer your question, let me first talk. I don’t know who you are. The only thing I know is that you can hunt things over your level. Not sure what ability you have, or how strong you are, I have no clue. And...”

He paused a moment as if to gather his thoughts.

As if coming to a decision, his words were heavy.

Perhaps it was a form of resignation.

But for some reason, his expression looked different, almost calm.

“I’m not sure which side you are on.”

“You are saying that you don’t know if I’m with the radical faction, right? Perhaps even hoping that I am?”

“Haha. Glad you’re straightforward. That’s right. I’ll speak without hiding anything. There was something I decided on this morning as I left the house.”

“What would that be?”

“I was on my way to expose the truth behind the association. The truth that the association is aware of the radical faction, yet all they’re trying to do is to turn a blind eye to the whole thing. Both association and the government.”

“If that’s the truth, and I was of the radical faction? You could be killed here right now, without a sound. Is that your choice? No regrets?”

“If I can stand proudly in front of my family, and if it is just my life, I do not have any, not in the slightest.”

I could tell from the surveillance I’ve carried out so far, but now I

was sure that he had nothing to do with the radical faction.

And I just realized today that the association is keeping tabs on him too.

He's probably similar to Yoon Jong-sun, a man of righteousness.

"I understand your resolve, but please think of your family when you're risking your life. I understand. First off, I'm not of the radical faction. Actually, I'm more like a threat to them?"

"Really?"

From his eyes, I could feel desperation.

"Yes. I think I answered your question well. Now can I expect you to answer mine?"

"What I want from you is... strength."

"Strength? I expected as much, but for what do you need it?"

"Currently, most of those who hold power in this country are connected to the radical faction."

"I knew it..."

"If they continue to hide the truth from the national organization as well the citizens, something big is going happen for sure."

"So you're asking me to give you the strength to smash the radical faction?"

"Yes. That's correct."

"What can you do for me then? You know that a one way trade is unfair."

"That....."

To Ho Jin, who was mumbling, I spoke with gusto.

"Information. I need all the information you have on them, as well as how to prevent the association from knowing about my growth as well. Is that possible?"

I finished our conversation that continued on for a while.

To avoid being discovered by the association's assassin, he headed for the level 13 dungeon using Warp.

I planned to head to the hunting grounds myself as usual.

If Ho Jin agrees to my plan and finds a way for me to enter the dungeons without any data being sent back to the association, I was planning to head to dungeons above the level 28 dungeon.

If the dungeons didn't work, I was planning to enter even if I had to smash open the portals.

Until I was able to achieve the level of strength I wanted.

I moved towards the midget's office to use the portal and head to the hunting grounds.

I rushed to catch a taxi, and was able to arrive quickly.

-beep. Ending ride.

"It's 14,000 won."

"Okay."

Paying my dues, I left the taxi.

Then.

-glop

I heard a mushy glopping noise that seemed to echo through a small alleyway, giving me the chills.

The world around me began to turn dark.

Pitch black darkness covered my vision.

Almost as if in a room completely isolated in darkness, I could not see in front of me as there was not a speck of light coming in.

In that short time, I was trapped.

“What....”

I casted my shield spells out of instinct, and then casted spells with both hands so I could see with the light coming off of them.

But I still couldn't see anything.

I didn't know where I was or what happened, so I looked about.

A man's voice began to reverberate from all directions.

The voice echoed as it would in a cave, so I could not tell exactly where the voice was coming from.

“It was you, you bastard. The one who killed Jin.”

Hearing his words, I could immediately tell who it was.

Joker, one of the three leaders of the radical faction, had appeared before me.

Knowing my existence as well as Jin's, I was sure it was him.

“Joker? Oh boy. I got to meet a lot of people today. Did you come here because you wanted end up like Jin?”

“Funny. This is your last chance. Lend your strength to me.”

“Did any of you lend your strength to me? Stop talking shit and get over here.”

“2 days. I'll be back in 2 days. Think carefully about your answer. Submit or die. One of these two answers will be the equivalent to anything you spit out, after all.”

‘Eye of Insight.’

From far away, I could see his form.

However, the distance was too far to see anything but a red dot.

Too far for me to attack.

“ORAAA!”

I began to run at full speed so I could take him down.

I felt that I wouldn't be satisfied until I smash Meteor on his face at the least.

However.

-glop

I heard the same sound from when I exited the taxi, and the darkness cleared.

The red dot I saw was no longer there.

“Crap....”

After leaving the darkness, my vision was filled with light again.

My regret of letting him escape only lasted a moment, as the taxi was still next to me.

It was the same taxi that I rode to get here after finishing my talk to Ho Jin.

Looking at it carefully, I could see that the driver was still counting the money I handed to him.

I was sure that at least 3 hours passed since I was surrounded in darkness.

But this scene, it was same as the moment I handed the driver the money.

‘Did he stop time or something?’

It seemed that he teleported me to another dimension that was not affected by time.

It was likely that it was an executioner class ability.

“Two days....”

Joker was moving faster than what Jin told me.

Turning away from the direction of the midget's office, I began to walk.

I called Jong Ho on the phone.

“Hello?”

“Hey, hyung.”

“Yeah. Did you meet with Mr. Kim Ho Jin?”

“Yes. Just finished talking with him.”

“How did it go? Pretty sure he did quit the association. What about the other thing? Do you think he’ll help out?”

“Not a hundred percent sure, but he did want something from me, so it looks like it’s likely to happen.”

“Glad it went smoothly”

“Yeah. Things did work out smoothly.”

Perhaps he noticed that something was off, because Jong Ho asked me.

“What’s up? Why are you sounding so glum?”

“Hyung.”

“Yeah. You can tell me.”

Banwol Jincheon. I had lent them to Jong Ho.

I was planning to take them back when I had to face Joker and the radical faction again.

Jong Ho knew it as well.

Mustering up as much of a serious voice I could, I spoke.

“I need those swords again.”

Chapter 66 - Joker

“I need those swords again.”

Hearing my words, Jong Ho remained silent for a while.

I could not even hear the sound of breathing over the phone.

“What. Did the call end? Hello?”

“Has it begun?”

His voice was far heavier than all the times when he declined the rare items I was offering to him.

It was almost as if I was talking to someone else entirely.

“Hm... I guess so?”

“You probably wouldn’t go after them if you don’t know where they are and you aren’t ready to do so.”

“Yes. After meeting with Mr. Kim Ho Jin, I was heading to the midget’s office to use Warp when he came to me.”

“Joker?”

“Yes. Since he himself appeared, it doesn’t look like it’ll end until I settle things once and for all.”

“Do you have a plan?”

“Of course. I have a strategy that would shock even Zhuge Liang.”

“Pfft. What’s the point of asking. Your plan probably amounts only to something like ‘Go in and kill them all,’ or something like that. Is there anything I can help with?”

“Correct! You already know well. If there is one thing you got wrong, it’s that the plan is more like ‘Kill all those that come to me,’ or so? Thanks to Proof of Oath, my mother should be safe. It’ll be tough for you to take them on, so I don’t really have anything to ask of you.”

“Let’s have dinner together today at least. I’ll finish up hunting early today and contact you.”

“Perhaps... the final supper?”

“You’re a real piece of work. Cracking a joke at a time like this. Sigh....”

“What about you hyung? You’re so cruel! Trying to send me off right away, I guess I don’t need to worry about the funeral.”

“Shut up! Don’t say stuff like that! I’ll see you later. I’ll bring the swords.”

“Yes. Gotcha.”

I pretended that I was carefree as best I could in front of Jong Ho, but in reality I was slightly worried.

One of the three leaders of the radical faction who even has a subclass, Joker.

I had fought the Noblesse guild as well as Jin.

It was obvious that he was going to incomparably tougher compared to what I’ve faced before.

In case this happened, I poured effort in many ways, and grew as strong as I could. However, I couldn’t know how strong he was until I fought with him.

If there is one good news, it’s that the only person who knows of my existence is Joker.

Not sure what made him seek me out in such a hurry though.

If I can take care of him cleanly, I shouldn’t be bothered for a while.

The next day, I received a call from Ho Jin.

With a promise of becoming allies, I was satisfied.

After receiving his call, I immediately headed towards him.

Since the fight with Joker will be tomorrow, I needed every bit of useful information I could obtain.

Since he was in the association for 20 years, I was sure that he'd have some useful advice at least.

After meeting him, I entered stealth with him and headed for the level 13 dungeon.

Using the fake IDs, of course.

“Whew. Finally, away from prying eyes.”

“Guess you're quite upset.”

“Yes. I think I'll be holding onto this grudge for a while. Here is what you requested of me from before.”

Ho Jin brought out an Awakened ID.

He had already left the association, but by using his contacts, he was able to obtain it with great difficulty from Se-Jin.

This ID looked identical to a normal ID, but it wouldn't send data to the association even after scanning it on the scanners located in front of the dungeons.

It also did not require any fingerprints, so you could think of it as a universal key, really.

“With this, you should be able to enter any dungeon of any level as you please. Without leaving a trace, of course.”

“Thank you.”

“It was made to test out the scanners when they malfunction, and there are only a few of them in existence. This could cause Se-Jin problems, as they do regular inspections. Whenever that happens, please lend it back to us for the brief duration of the inspection.”

“Don't worry about that, I'll do as you say.”

“Here. Take it.”

“Hm... This proof of our alliance, I’ll take it two days from now. I don’t think I’ll need it right now. Or it could be that I won’t need it at all.”

“What do you mean?”

It’s already decided that we’re on the same boat.

There was no reason to hide it from him.

There’s a saying, two heads are better than one.

I continued to speak.

“I’ll be meeting with the radical faction. To fight them, of course.”

“What....”

“You probably know already, but there are 3 leaders underneath the overboss in the radical faction.”

“.....”

“Out of them, a person named Joker is gunning for me. To be concise, he wants my ability.”

“Ability?”

“Yes. I’ll reveal it to you after this.”

“I also know Joker as well. Back when I-jin Han was the president of the association, my primary task was to investigate Joker of the radical faction.”

Previously, I received a text that the association was purchasing Manticore’s Soulstone that dropped from the level 12 dungeon.

On the text, the name I-jin Han was on there.

It’s been only a few months, but I guess a new association president took office.

“Joker, Ghost, and Dark Lady. Only a few in the association and

government know of their existence. The previous president I mentioned before, he was planning an attack on them before they attacked first. However, before his plan could be carried out, he went missing, and some rotten man by the name of Choi Man Seo took office.”

“The classified mission that targeted the radical faction was canceled, and the president of the association that pushed for it disappeared? Doesn’t it look like the radical faction had a hand in this?”

“Yes, I think so as well. Seeing that many association members tried to gloss over his disappearance, I couldn’t even predict just how many of the radical faction members were hidden in here.”

“I see. Can you tell me more about Joker?”

Then Ho Jin told me information I already knew.

Out of the three leaders, he had the greatest combat capabilities, with the rare executioner class to boot.

However, the information he told after that, seemed like it’ll be useful in the fight to come.

“Joker is a person who only focused on his offensive capabilities. It shows that he has no talent for any defensive abilities.”

“What do you mean?”

“From the information I gathered back then, I was able to learn that the three leaders fight amongst one another to determine who is on top.”

“Strength is political power. Seems exactly like something they would do.”

“That’s right. And this was decided by the overboss, so there’s nothing more to add. There is no information on Ghost, as far as I know. He really is a ghost. Not even his ability... That leaves Dark Lady and Joker.”

“.....”

“Dark Lady, like the other leaders, also has a secondary class. Tanker, as well as the assassin class.”

“Defense and offense. Not lacking in any field.”

“Yes. But the important thing is that Joker was able to get through her iron clad defense. Not sure if she wanted to look good in front of her boss, but she used a lot more assassin class skills rather than tanker skills. Guess she wanted to show the boss her offensive capabilities.”

“.....”

“However, unlike Dark Lady who was a mess after taking countless hits, Joker didn’t receive any damage. Even though Dark Lady gave up on defense to go on the offensive, she could not inflict any damage on Joker. It was because he used the Dodge Aura skill from the executioner class. Seeing that, she began to focus on her defense. Her offensive capability would go down, but she was aiming for an extended fight. It was also to recover the damage she took, most likely.”

Listening to his explanation, instead of finding out the weaknesses, I was only learning about his strengths.

It was as if he was trying to cut down my fighting spirit even before the fight began.

Stopping him, I asked a question.

“Wait a minute. Didn’t you say his defense was weak? From what you told me about Joker so far, doesn’t he sound like someone who is strong in both offense and defense?”

“Sorry. My explanation was too long. The point is that the shield Joker uses is different from regular shields.”

“Does it not have a cooldown and cast time?”

“No. It doesn’t get affected by the amount of damage absorbed. It

blocks a certain number of attacks.”

Regular shields break apart faster the stronger the attack it absorbs.

To increase the amount absorbed, the shield skill would need to be leveled up.

But from what Ho Jin was telling me, Joker’s Dodge Aura did not have a cap on the damage it could block.

No matter how powerful that attack was, it would be counted as a single block of an attack.

Ho Jin continued.

“Even though there is not much information out there about the executioner class, information on most of the skills the executioner class has can be found in the association. However, I could not find any information or any similar skills to his Dodge Aura.”

“I see.”

“Since their fight ended in less than 5 min, I do not know if he has any more hidden skills.”

“Definitely a tough one to face against.”

“However, Dark Lady’s continuous attacks towards Joker eventually went past the Dodge Aura’s number of dodges, and when it did, apparently Joker took a massive amount of damage, even though Dark Lady focused more on defense so that the attack wasn’t particularly strong. Thus, I cannot figure out what the hidden skill is, but I know that he only put stat points into strength.”

“Now I understand what Jin meant. An ability solely focused on 1v1.”

“Huh? Jin?”

“Ah. Nothing.”

“Are you really going to respond to Joker’s taunt tomorrow?”

“That’s right. I have the information I need to take him down, so I should face him.”

“There are some rankers with righteousness similar to General Yoon Jong-sun, but they aren’t strong enough to face them. That’s why I’m counting on you.”

“I understand what you mean. The day after tomorrow, I’ll be back safely to receive this ID.”

“Okay. I’ll hold onto it well until then. Please be careful.”

“Then, I’ll be off.”

Entering stealth, I left the dungeon.

There was nothing else to prepare.

I had to face off against him at some point, but the time to do so had just arrived a little bit earlier.

Clearing my head, I headed home.

In the room filled with darkness like the skill he used, Joker was deep in thought.

He was thinking about making Min-Cheol submit so that he can use him for the dungeon portal explosion project.

He did not even think of the possibility of defeat.

Even if he had infinite mana, he had a few skills beyond ranking that could penetrate the mana shield after all.

It would only be a matter of time before he could win back the trust of Zekill that he lost to Dark Lady.

It was then that someone knocked on his door.

“Enter.”

“Sir Joker. It’s 21:00, as you said.”

“Right. It’s already time.”

Joker grabbed his weapon.

As if to prove his class, each hand held Executioner’s Sword.

Twin swords known for their smooth curves.

The edge on each sword had teeth like a shark’s.

In front of the swords that chilled most blue with fear, it seemed that no one could stand in front of them without cowering.

Unless it’s something serious, he usually does not bring weapons with him.

Seeing as he did now, his subordinate became tense as he spoke.

“We’ll follow. Should we ready up about 20 of our members?”

“I’m fine. Take care of your individual tasks.”

“Yes, Joker.”

The subordinate left the room.

Joker planned to use Min-Cheol solely as a mana tank.

If Zekill found out about Min-Cheol’s existence, he would see the unlimited potential he has and would probably raise him as a leader.

With a crazed smile, Joker grabbed onto the handles of his swords.

Chapter 67 - Final Battle with Joker

That day was nearing.

The day Joker spoke about.

Due to my fast leveling, I distributed all the stat points that have been piling up.

It's true that I didn't bother with it much because the stats really wouldn't affect my hunting speed.

I even put on the skeleton ring with its +20 strength that has long become obsolete to me.

Both hands held tightly onto the Banwol Jincheons that were returned to me by Jong Ho.

Strength: 1788

Mana: ∞

Dexterity: 10

Stamina: 910

It was kind of disappointing that I did not have any armor or gear that would raise my Stamina or Dexterity.

However. I had an item that makes one immune to all status effects, Titan Boots.

Louver's set, which allows me to cast empowered skills and turns absorbed mana into a shield.

Lich King's armor set, which reduces all damage taken by 40%.

And lastly, an item that I recently received, the Lizard Gauntlet that reduces magic damage taken by 20%.

I had obtained as much as I could in the short time I had.

These weren't all of it.

Meteor and Iceberg were both level 200, which allowed me to

cast them endlessly.

Countless shield skills, all of which were Awakened.

Reflect, Groggy, and Holy Damage. Powerful S ranking shields with additional effects.

First, I checked if there were any gear I forgot to equip.

After that, I opened up the stat window to look at all the skills I've obtained and Awakened.

No matter how well I was equipped with the best skills, if I wasn't able to use them at will, it would be as useless as not learning them in the first place.

Noticing how nervous I was, it finally sunk in that the fight with him was near.

It was around the time when the sun is about to set.

"Thank you for the dinner."

"Oh? Why are you saying that all of a sudden. Did you mature?"

"The stew's deep taste of beef broth really moved me."

"Hoho! Did you taste it? I didn't think you'd notice it."

"What! Was it really from the beef broth?"

"It's okay, it's okay. It's not bad for you."

"After 18 years, Mrs. Park's secret recipe is stolen. Looks like it'll make the headlines tomorrow?"

Being serious isn't really my style.

If worse comes to worse, this could be my last goodbye.

With that, I told her that I was off to hunt and left the house.

Surprising, he had come to my exact location before.

If he had information about me, he would've waited in front of

my house. Instead, we met for the first time at the midget's office.

It was possible that he used the executioner's class skill 'Searching Eye' or used the unique accessory 'Searching Necklace'.

No matter where I was, he was going to find me anyways.

This wasn't a fight between just any run of the mill Awakened.

No matter where we fought, the shockwave and the sound of destruction would fill the surrounding areas.

Just like the fight with the Noblesse before, I wanted to fight in a separate battlefield that was already prepared.

There would be no benefit to drawing attention, after all.

With that reason, I left home and decided to head for Yangpyeong.

It was an area with lots of mountains, with a high chance that there were hidden portals in the valleys.

Because of the dangerously high possibility of portal explosions from the hidden portals, it wasn't an area fit for people to reside in.

It was so dangerous that the Awakened association in the area was dissolved, and all the residents were forced to relocate.

I headed for the abandoned association building to use the battlefield that was located underground.

In front of the house, Jong Ho's car was waiting.

The ruins of Yangpyeong was an area that even taxis feared to tread.

And since I was never there before, it wasn't possible for me to use Warp.

Jong Ho was leaning on the car, smoking a cigarette.

At his feet, there were at least 10 cigarette butts.

Seeing me, Jong Ho quickly stamped out his cigarette and spoke.

“So you’re here?”

“Yep.”

“Both morning and evenings are rather cold. Only a few days ago, it felt too hot.”

“I guess so.”

“Guess it’s true that spring and fall are going away.”

As if we were awkward with one another when alone together, he was only giving me polite greetings that strayed away from the main subject.

It was like him to do that, so in this situation, I thought this was better than for him to give me pity or encouragement.

I would probably do the same as well.

Picking up the cigarette butts, he got in the car.

“Whew. It’s cold, let’s get in quick.”

“....”

I went in Jong Ho’s car as well.

In the backseat, Ho Jin was already there.

“Oh? What if surveillance followed you here?”

“It’s okay. Shouldn’t have one today. Seems that Se-Jin isn’t mediocre at his job.”

“Ah. I see. Guess I should at least treat him to a nice dinner later.”

“Of course. Haha.”

Just in case, I used Eye of Insight, but just like Ho Jin said, there was no surveillance on him.

Ho Jin and Jong Ho. They knew each other well already due to party hunting together.

That's why, today, Ho Jin had contacted him ahead of time to meet together.

As the car started, a silence settled for a long time.

It seemed that it was a difficult situation for anyone to speak up.

I was the first one to break the silence.

"Old man."

"Yes."

"If I lose to Joker, will you tell everything to the world like you said before?"

"That's unlikely, but if it really does happen, I plan to do so."

"Do you think things will change?"

"Huh?"

"If you do that, do you think the world would change?"

"That...."

"Truth be told, I'm going there to take care of personal business. I'm not going there for some noble reason like taking down one of the radical faction leaders because they possess a threat to South Korea."

"I'm aware. However, whatever the reason may be, it has to be starting point for the world to change. If it is possible with my life, I would sacrifice myself hundreds and thousands of times to make it possible."

There was a glint in Ho Jin's eyes, just like the time when he was giving his all to catch me.

Eyes that were clear and determined, looking directly at his goal.

For some reason, I couldn't help but trust him.

"I see. You're holding onto the Awakened ID, right? I'll be back for it soon."

“Yes. You have to.”

As the heavy air in the car dissipated a bit, Jong Ho asked.

“Hey, did you plan to meet him at this hour?”

“No. That’s not it.”

“Then I hope that Joker doesn’t appear even after we arrive.”

“Do you think that makes any sense? Old man, is there any reports of Joker having a serious case of forgetfulness?”

“N.. No. No reports like that...”

“Hyung. It seems we can’t hope for that?..”

On my left was an exemplary model citizen even without laws, who couldn’t throw away a single cigarette butt without disposing of it properly.

Behind me was an ex department head of the association who burned with righteousness.

It almost felt like I was the bad guy.

A long drive later, we arrived at Yangpyeong.

There were checkpoints set up on the way to Yangpyeong that prevented vehicles from passing, but with the use of Mass Stealth and Silent, we were able to pass without any issues.

If that battle here ends, all I would have to do is use the Warp skill.

To the two who said they’ll wait in front of the building, I turned them around saying they could take collateral damage.

Once again, Jong Ho took a long whiff of his smoke.

His expression was filled with many conflicting emotions.

“Then, we’ll be going. Call me after it’s over.”

“Yes. Don’t worry about me and take care on the way back. Ah! What about the checkpoints?”

“I didn’t think about that.”

“Don’t worry about that. We just need to get some grass in a bag and it’ll be solved. A lot of herbalists come to dig up herbs here.”

“As I heard from rumors, the association really works hard. Security is tight too.”

“... I’m ashamed.”

“Then, please take care.”

With that, the two left.

There wasn’t a single flicker of light in the association building of Yangpyeong.

I was heading towards the battlefield underground, sure that Joker would be coming there.

The hallways rang loudly with my footsteps.

It was then, while I was traversing through the empty dark hallway.

-thud thud

.

.

-thud thud

-thud thud

In the hallway where I could only hear my footsteps, I suddenly felt his presence.

And the presence kept closing in.

Joker, without any warning or making any sound, was next to me.

“As expected, you found me? Joker.”

“Kuhuhu. It seems this kid has a lot more secrets than I expected. Even making me travel this to this remote location to find you.”

“It’s because I’m very shy.”

“Seems like you chose this place for battle. Since you came all the way here, I guess I can take your answer as a no?”

“We just have to go down one more level, you know? I’ll give you the answer you want without leaving room for regrets down there. Let’s stop talking up here and go down.”

With Joker, we were heading for the same place.

A short time passed, and we were in the underground battlefield.

Without any words, Joker and I faced towards each other.

The light coming off from each of our swords were the only indication of where we were.

Then.

-CRACK!

As Joker snapped his fingers, the dark battlefield was lit brightly.

The darkness was similar to a dungeon.

There was nothing that gave off light, but you could still see each other clearly.

I could tell that the skill was similar to the one he used to pull me into complete darkness before.

Joker spoke.

“You chose death. Why?”

“....”

“Don’t you feel that it is unfair how those with incredible power are treated as the same with those regular humans? If you come to me, we could step on them and command them at will.”

“This is a famous saying in a movie, and it feels like it was made

so I can use it here. I'll only say it once, so listen well."

"...."

"How can a wolf cub go under a dog? You dog shit!"

-CRASH!

-BOOM!

In a split second, a massive black condensed ball of flame headed towards Joker.

Meteor Call had reached level 200.

The intense flames that were red before had now completely turned black.

Two Meteors that I casted with each of my hand struck him directly without any delay.

With that massive impact, the floor of the battlefield, which was made of nano material, was now a massive crater.

It was a destructive force that not even rankers that represented their nations could reproduce.

The surrounding area was burning in black flames.

However, he walked out from the intense flames swinging his dual blades, as if nothing was wrong.

As expected, he has a shield that isn't affected by how much damage it takes.

With a sinister smile, Joke spoke to me.

"Kuhaha! Did you cast the skill while walking over here? I'll applaud you on hiding the casting motion from me. But that's too bad. Out of all the skills you have, it's probably the strongest right? Now, what will you do?"

Ignoring him, I asked him.

"How did you come here?"

“...”

“Did you use Warp? If you run away later using Warp, I think I’ll be very angry.”

“Running away? Pfft! Do you think I’ll give you time to cast another Mete...!”

-CRASH!

-BOOM!

“Did you not notice it yet?”

The Banwol in my right hand was pointing at the flames he walked past.

Even he wouldn’t have any information regarding a Meteor Call that had reached level 200.

It was because no one had reached this skill level yet.

He looked towards the black flames.

“No... No way...”

“Isn’t it surprising? It’s magic, shithead!”

His expression was filled with shock as I continued to rain down Meteor.

Of course, he hadn’t taken any damage yet, but it would be the first time he has seen a level 200 Meteor.

Suddenly, the smile on his face disappeared.

Then, Joke fixed his posture and gripped his dual swords tightly.

“Even if you say you want to come under me now, I’ll decline! Your grave will be here!”

Chapter 68 - Final Battle With Joker (2)

“The kitten has now become the tiger...”

It already has become a habit to cover myself with Mana Shield.

On top of that, Reflect Shield, Frozen Shield, and Spirit Armor encompassed me as well.

There was a gap between my shields due to the cooldown being longer than their duration.

To cover this gap, I was saving Iron Skin and Holy Block.

And if I did receive his attack, Louver's set should absorb the mana to form a shield.

The gray armor that covered Joker began to emit a glow.

Almost as if his form was boiling, smoke began to rise from him.

The effect must be from an attack buff skill of the executioner class.

Stomping towards me, he spoke.

“I'm relieved that I can take you down now instead of later...”

“You think it's possible by yourself? You should've at least brought one person who could take your corpse.”

“I wonder how long your confidence will last.”

-SLICE!

The shock wave seemed to cut apart the very ground, making my ears ring.

For a second, I could not follow his movements.

In a blink of an eye, his attack struck me.

He was behind me.

However, since my shield seemed fine, I figured it wasn't an attack that was beyond ranking.

My Mana Shield was quaking like ripples of a pond after a stone was tossed in.

On top of that, with that single attack, Louver's Bracelet was fully charged.

It was an attack that had its damage reduced by the defensive equipment I wore, which included 40% physical damage reduction and 60% magic damage reduction.

'Even with the reduction, for the damage to be this much...'

It just showed how much power was behind that attack.

The bracelet glowed blue, almost as if asking me to hurry up and cast an empowered skill.

However, it would be useless as of now against him.

The defensive skill blocked a certain number of attacks, so it wasn't damage I needed.

"Mana Shield...."

"Oraaaa!"

-BOOM! BOOM!

I spammed Explosion and Holy Shock at him.

I didn't know how many attacks Dodge Aura could block, but it would eventually wear out.

And my Mana is endless.

However, he was easily avoiding my single cast attacks as if mocking me.

Power and speed.

Having both, it was as if I was looking at a wild beast.

Out of the two Banwol Jincheons that spewed out constant fire, one stopped.

And in a brief moment...

-whoosh

A frozen field enough to cover the entire battlefield formed.

I had cast 'Glacial Field'.

It doesn't do a lot of damage, but since it is a wide range magic attack, it should constantly hit him.

To top that off, I used Gravity Laser as well.

Before, when I used it on Jin, the attack was stopped because I could not find his location.

This time however, I used this skill after casting Eye of Insight, so it would hit him even if he went into stealth.

After allowing me to attack him constantly, he suddenly started to move again.

Joker slammed his sword into the ground.

It was as if he was laughing at the attacks coming towards him.

Despite the floor being made of nano material, his swords easily went through.

I guess it's only possible because he did put all his stats into strength.

After that, Joker pulled his swords out of the ground and put them back into each of their scabbards at his waist.

I didn't know what skill would be coming out.

It was then.

A dark hole formed behind him.

It looked like a black hole, but didn't appear to be sucking in anything.

After forming, swords same as the ones he held came out of the hole, floating into formation.

It was an effect just like using Piercing Sword.

Immediately, he raised his hand towards me.

“Take this!”

Receiving his command, the swords poured towards me at a frightening speed.

In an instant, my head began to run at full speed.

It definitely wasn't a warrior skill.

And it wasn't amongst the executioner class skills that Jong Ho showed me. I haven't seen any skills with that kind of effect.

It was highly likely that the skill was beyond ranking.

‘If that's the case...!’

-CRACK!

Instead of trying to avoid the attack, I cast Iceberg in front of me.

A massive iceberg appeared through the ground below.

The transparent iceberg had become tinted with purple after reaching level 200, and sparkled as if it was chiseled obsidian, blocking the path in front of me.

This skill was definitely for attacking.

The skill explanation even said that it was an A+ ranking attack skill.

But right now, Iceberg was being used to block his attack as a defensive measure.

I understood that a skill's use wasn't limited by its rank or type, but the user's sense of when and where is the right time to use it.

Joker's attack that flew in began to embed itself into the iceberg.

Its destructive force caused the block of ice that was tough as steel to crumble.

My guess wasn't wrong.

It was definitely an attack skill beyond ranking.

I stopped my attack to cast an additional Iceberg.

Seeing that his attack became useless due to being blocked, Joker couldn't contain his rage.

“You little... Where'd you learn such tricks!”

“I think my shield is saying hi to you. What about you?”

“What! AHHH!”

Unsheathing his twin swords, Joker charged again.

Each time his feet struck the ground, I could feel the earth shake.

He allowed me to continue attacking him as he charged towards me.

He charged until he was close to me.

Canceling the shields that ran out of their duration time, I cast Iron Skin and Holy Block.

My grip on the Banwol Jincheons tightened.

He would probably continue sticking onto me at melee range with a close-quarters combat attack.

If that's the case, I should meet him with my own.

“Come at me!”

‘Piercing Sword’

-CLANG!

Without a doubt, Joker was very powerful.

He was blocking or evading most of the countless swords pouring out.

However, it was near impossible to defend against all of them perfectly.

Like the skill beyond ranking that Joker used, thousands of swords followed my orders and flew at him.

It was enough to wonder if there was a skill better suited to getting rid of his shield.

I was casting Piercing Swords with both hands.

Thanks to Dual Casting, I was able to cast skills with a third hand.

If I gave up on Mana Shield, I should be able to end his life even faster.

However, I was not going to make the same mistake I did before.

I was already pouring a cheat-like attack towards him anyways.

“Let’s see how long you can dodge!”

“You!”

It was then.

‘It pierced!’

The cut from the Banwol Jincheon was left clearly on his shoulder.

Not missing this chance, I stopped casting Piercing Sword from one hand.

Then I cast S ranking attack skill Formless Sword Aura.

Through Formless Sword Aura, I naturally obtained the art of the sword, allowing me to strike down his neck with perfect precision.

Despite the count decreasing by half, it was taking everything Joker had to block Piercing Sword.

“Ku-uck!”

I could feel it through the sword.

It was an attack with enough force easily slices through his hide.

Surprisingly, Joker pulled his body back quickly, preventing the sword from cutting in deep.

However, the important thing wasn’t that I was unable to take

him out in one hit.

It was that his Dodge Aura had run out of dodges.

He shouldn't be able to avoid the next attack.

After a successful attack from Formless Sword Aura, the attacks that follow after cannot be defended against.

No matter how good his senses were, I thought that it would be difficult to avoid the sword aura attacks that he didn't know where it was coming from.

“Ku-uh....”

“I'll finish you. Joker.”

It was then.

He moved his hands like before, entering stealth.

“I think the one pulling dirty tricks is you, not me.”

“Kuha. Do you think it would be over like this. You weakling.”

“I'll show you that what you're doing now will only amount to buying time!”

-Clang!

‘Wha... What the!’

I had already found his position using Eye of Insight.

To close the distance once more, I rushed him.

However, as I was running, I ran into solid darkness as if a wall was blocking the way and couldn't continue forward.

I definitely had status effect immunity due to the Titan Boots I was wearing.

It wasn't a type of bind or illusion, but probably a very strong defensive skill.

I was blocked in from all sides by walls roughly 10 meters wide.

No matter how much I swung my sword, the walls did not break.

-Clang! Clang!

“Kuhaha!”

My surprise for his sudden unexpected attack was short lived, because something bigger happened after.

From the 4 walls that surrounded me, 3 black holes Joker cast before appeared.

The size was also different from last time.

It was big enough to cover up each wall.

“This is crazy!”

I could only cast two Icebergs.

If I gave up on Mana Shield, I’d be vulnerable to his attacks.

Blocking it with Piercing Sword?

No. It wouldn’t be enough to try to block a skill beyond ranking with Joker’s power on top with just brute force.

As if suffocating me, countless Joker’s twin blades formed.

It was obvious that no matter what shields I used, it would be difficult to even stay alive.

The sound of friction between metal. And the fear from the surrounding view.

It was brief, but the pressure was immense.

“Whew... If I meet an executioner class ahead in the future, I’d be shaking.”

“Is that really your last words? The word ‘ahead’ doesn’t seem to fit you.”

“Pfft.”

-CRACK!

Casting Iceberg to each my sides, I cast Devil Avatar for the remaining side.

Giant creatures befitting of a level 200 skill spawned.

Being in a small room with 3 giant monsters, I felt more suffocated to be honest.

“KUWAAA!”

“Grr....”

‘Loud voice and look at that size. Perfect for a meatshield. Joker’s skill lasts for roughly 1 minute. Just hold out until then.’

“Defend. Block the attack with your whole body, with your lives!”

“KUWUHHH!”

Understanding my command, the avatars blocked the black hole with their bodies.

On top of that, the Iceberg I cast on both sides made his attacks useless.

All around me were covered with the blood from the avatars.

It was true that they had great defensive capabilities, but it looked useless in front of Joker’s attack.

Shattered bits from both icebergs joined the fray as well.

“Just have to block for a bit longer!”

“KUWAACK.”

The three avatars lost their lives with pierced bodies at the same time the black hole ceased.

I felt sorry for them as they were butchered pathetically, but in a situation where my life was in danger, that kind of compassion was useless.

“You did well.”

As soon as I said those words, the darkness the trapped me cleared.

Joker had approached me already.

The end of his sword was bent.

Using that as if it was a hook, he latched onto me.

It wasn't a skill, but instead brute force he used to bind me.

Since I had my shield, I didn't receive any damage, but it was an insane amount of power.

At the same time, my Formless Sword Aura began to cut him apart.

“Ku.. KU-URK!”

Joker was letting a terrifying scream out while leaning in next to my ear.

However, it didn't seem like he had any thoughts of letting go.

Suddenly feeling worried, I cast all of my shields.

And with all my strength, I pierced his heart with my sword and pushed him away with my left arm.

Then.

-BOOM!

“KUWAAK!”

Chapter 69 - Final Battle With Joker (3)

-BOOM!

Almost as if his body was a bomb, he exploded.

The impact was strong enough to not only destroy the floor, but all the walls of the battlefield.

After the explosion, I looked far worse off than the battlefield.

My left arm, as well as my body that I turned away were ripped in half and blown away from the explosion.

The Lizardmen Gauntlet was sprawled out on the floor.

On top of that, the nape of my neck was branded with an unknown symbol.

‘Damn it.....’

It was a special ability from the executioner’s class that Joker possessed, known as ‘Isolation’.

Unlike what I heard from Jin, I was anxious because he wasn’t using his ability.

I was even looking down on him because I thought his attacks only reached at this level even with the ability.

But who knew he’d select his target for the ability like this.

Isolation, an ability that increased damage taken by the target. It was an ability that shined even more during 1v1s.

There aren’t many who could receive this kind of explosion and his attacks with the ability.

A massive ringing filled my ears.

Also.

“Urrgh!”

A pain filled moan came out naturally.

In my vision, now filled with splatters of red, Joker was slowly regenerating himself.

His form that had exploded was slowly coming back together, similar to the liquid human from terminator.

I had my Mana Shield, with 2 ranking shields casted on top of them.

It could've been a skill beyond ranking, but the self-destruct could only be explained by the passive he had.

It happened while I was casting heal on myself.

Perhaps he had recovered fully already, he began to mock me in a smug tone.

“Kuha! To think I'd have to use Isolation.”

“Urgh! I really stepped on shit this time.”

“It looks like you're in a lot of pain. Yes.. that expression. That expression is the one that suits you the best!”

“...ugh, ur....”

‘Just a few fingers blown off... I can recover using Status Denial after I beat him down and leave... For now, let's focus on recovering. No, first I have to prepare against his attacks.’

Continuing to cast Heal, I picked up the gauntlet and Banwol Jincheon that fell to the floor.

The bleeding nearly stopped, but the damage would take a long time to heal with a recovery skill that was of low ranking like Heal.

Even during the fight against Park Hyun where my stomach was cut open from an attack by Jin, it didn't take this long to recover.

Perhaps it was due to the attack being used with his ability?

The gauntlet that I put my hand back in was giving off an emerald hue, mixing with the blood that was still smearing out.

-Drip. Drip.

Pain continued from the hand that held the sword.

Think about it. Despite not realizing the importance of it, just how much you'd be distracted even from a small papercut.

Now you know how important it is.

However, right now my fingers weren't cut or ripped off, but blown off.

The overwhelming pain was enough to break my concentration.

-Stomp. Stomp.

Joker was walking towards me with his dual swords pulled out.

It's already been a while ago since the cuts on his neck and shoulder were gone without a trace.

Even the damage from the Formless Sword Aura that he took with his whole body was gone.

I needed to buy time to recover.

Since he was going to attack again, I needed to get away from him.

If I could disappear from his sight completely so I can buy time to heal my wounds, there would be another chance.

A skill that's perfect for this situation exists.

'Mass Stealth Jutsu.'

Instantly, I disappeared from view.

Quickly, I casted Flash and hid myself in a corner of the ruined battlefield.

I even used Silent to hide the sound of my breathing.

Mana Shield and Reflect Shield.

I used one hand for Heal while keeping a lookout for him.

Looking at the spot where I was before, he mumbled to himself.

“Stealth... and he covered up the sound he makes.”

“Ugh.”

“At this rate, it would be difficult to find him. But...”

Joker had a smile on his face.

Almost like a predator that found its prey drinking water by the pond without any suspicion.

Once more, red smoke began to rise from his body.

Then closing his eyes, he spoke.

“But you know. Guess you don’t have any skills to cover up this heavy scent of blood. Oraa!”

-SLICE!

He turned his body towards the exact location I was stealthed at, throwing both the twin swords at me.

As the swords left his hands, it was covered in dark red flames, flying straight towards me.

It didn’t have any spin and it didn’t shake in the slightest, as the throw had an incredible amount of speed and power.

At this rate, it was going to skewer me before I had time to even prepare to react.

It would be over in a moment.

Both of his twin swords arrived right in front of my eyes.

Looking at the swords, I froze.

Even my eyes that should’ve automatically closed due to reflex stayed open.

There’s a saying that before you die, the life you lived comes all back to you in a flash.

I realized that it was true.

It was a short life of 18 years, but all the memories I lived began

to pass me right before my eyes.

All the way up until the last film of a movie projector.

It was vivid, almost as if I was viewing from the sidelines.

As I returned to the present hoping that my situation had changed, I felt more hopeless than before.

Almost as if it was a slow motion video, Joker's swords clashed with my shields.

Who would have known that this weak looking weapon toss skill would be a skill beyond ranking.

Without being able to resist at all, my Mana Shield crumpled.

Almost as if fighting to be the first, both twin swords came in at the same time.

And finally.

“.....”

Without realizing, I had closed my eyes, thinking that this was the end. However, much time had passed.

One thing that consoled me was that the swords impaling my head would hurt less than my fingers did right now, but I had to accept that this was death.

Guess it's true about what they say, that death's door closes the slowest.

I heard a noise from where Joker was at.

“URRRK!”

‘Is that his disgusting laugh again? I had to kill him at least before dying....’

“KUUUHHH!”

‘He's being really loud.... Wait! That's not the sound of laughter?’

After accepting my end and letting everything go, now I gathered

my resolve once more.

The pain I felt through the end of my hand. And the vivid sounds of his screams.

Opening my eyes, what I saw was enough to surprise me.

Both his twin swords had pierced his chest, straight through his heart.

With his face contorted, I saw Joker screaming as he tried to pull out the swords.

Each time he pulled at the hooked swords, sticky blood spurted out like a fountain.

It was a stupid thought, but just a moment ago, I thought I was dead for sure.

But how did it come to this.

Suddenly an idea came to me.

That was it.

“Reflect Shield.....”

That’s right. The skill he used on me was blocked by the counter effect from the Reflect Shield.

The attack had flown back towards him.

Since it was a level 200 Reflect Shield, the reflection chance was 50%.

The reflected damage was 70%.

He probably attacked me while using his Isolation ability, so the attack did twice the damage.

Not knowing that it would come back to him, that is.

It didn’t matter how this situation came to be, because it was my chance.

The pain from my fingers? Pain from my charred blown up

body?

I didn't feel anything from these petty injuries.

Another chance had found me.

Firstly, I had to finish off Joker, who was critically wounded.

“Oraaa!”

I cast an attack buff.

Due to the attack I received, Louver's Bracelet was fully charged for an empowered skill.

Dashing towards him, I began to throw out my Formless Sword Aura.

Pulling out his swords from his body, Joker began to swing his swords wildly.

Due to the extended fight, it appeared that he was running out of mana.

He wasn't even using the most basic executioner class skill that strengthened his body.

He was only swinging his swords with just his bare strength.

I wasn't sure if it was only due to chance, but he was blocking few of the invisible Formless Sword Aura attacks.

Each time he moved though, Joker was bleeding out more and more.

Some time passed like that.

“Huff... Huff. You dare! Someone like you!”

His breathing was heavy.

I wasn't sure if he was screaming or roaring, but his loud voice filled the battlefield.

He had already received several Formless Sword Aura attacks with his body.

Blood leaked out from in between his grey armor, forming a pool on the floor.

His eyes were already unfocused and body limp, and he was no longer capable of combat.

Despite all that, he still held his sword and continued to stumble towards me.

-slice!

In one swing, I cut his arm that held the twin swords.

His arm, as well as the sword that was held, clattered to the floor.

Joker was trying to put his remaining arm into his armor.

Was it his last attempt? It looked as though he was trying to find something.

“Tenacious bastard.”

“Ku... Kuuk.... I, to be defeated by the likes of you....”

“A class and ability that are specialized in killing people. I shouldn’t stay alive.”

“It’s not over y...”

-slice!

-thud

The crescent Banwol Jincheon cleanly separated his head from his body.

Blood spilled forth from his neck, and the head had a twisted expression as it collided on the ground.

There was no information I needed from him.

To be honest, he probably had lots of information.

But I didn’t want to hear anything from him anymore.

The rage I felt against him suddenly blew up.

And that's how Joker died.

I covered Joker's corpse with Fire Shock.

It was to make sure that no evidence remained.

Even if this was a restricted area that no longer gets visitors, it didn't hurt to be thorough.

Meteor gave out very powerful flames, but no skill can compare to this one when it comes to incinerating things to oblivion.

"Whew...."

After getting rid of the evidence, I focused solely on recovery.

Perhaps due to the injury I received being quite serious, a few levels of the Heal spell rose during the process.

The corpse was incinerated without a trace left, with only the grey armor and sword remaining.

The weapon and armor could withstand the fierce flames of Fire Shock.

I was sure that it was worth a vast fortune.

"I'll take care of them well, Joker."

It happened when I lifted his armor.

-clang.

Something that was in the armor fell to the floor.

The size was similar to an Awakened Essence, but the shape and color was completely different.

A transparent pearl that was perfectly spherical.

I remembered that Joker was trying to find something with his amputated arm before he died.

I couldn't help but think that this was what he was looking for.

Since I didn't know what ability this pearl possessed, I carelessly shoved it into my pocket.

With that, I gathered all the items and exited the association building.

"81 missed calls? People would believe it if I told them that this was my lover."

-riiiing. riiiiiing.

Even in that short span of time, another call came.

Just as I thought, it was Jong Ho.

"Hel..."

"Hey you! Are you okay?"

"Of course. I'm fine."

"Are you hurt anywhere?"

"Hm.... Status Denial. Can I get it immediately through the midget?"

"What. Is it serious? Where and how is the injury!"

"It's not that serious. Don't worry."

"When will you come back? What about Joker? What happened with Joker?"

"I killed him. In about 10 minutes, I'll take Warp to get to the midget's office. I'll see you there, hyung."

"Ok. I'll head there right now and wait for you. You have to come straight away, okay?"

"Yes."

Ending the call, I was engrossed in my thoughts.

I only survived this battle with pure luck.

It was also pure luck that I won this battle.

A 50% chance to reflect.

If Reflect Shield wasn't able to successfully counter?

Obviously the role of the winner and loser in this battle would be swapped.

"Luck... I can't depend on luck for my life."

I couldn't hope to get lucky every time.

I needed to obtain more power for the days ahead.

Chapter 70 - Loot from Joker Hunting(?)

Ending the call with Jong ho, I took a moment to re-organize my thoughts.

I had arrived at Yangpyeong's association building late at night.

After the battle with Joker, it had already become dusk.

A cloudless greyish blue sky.

It wasn't quite winter yet, slightly making my breath foggy.

"Shall I get going?"

I casted Warp to the midget's office.

The Warp skill was very useful, connecting any place the caster has been to.

Other than the fact that you can't go back and forth with one cast, this skill could be considered one of the best skills.

Jong Ho should have arrived there already.

Even during the call with me, it sounded as though he was getting ready to leave.

Picking up the loot that I got from Joker, I jumped into the warp spell.

I always conjure the warp gate in a small storage room next to the bathroom.

The feeling I get as I step through the gate is like this.

It's that feeling you get when you put your foot out, thinking that there is another step to the stairs you are climbing.

It's a strange and dizzy feeling that's hard to describe.

And then my view changes to where I wanted to go.

The midget felt my presence and spoke to Jong Ho.

“Looks like he’s here?”

“Is that the room?”

“Yes. That’s correct.”

-click

Jong Ho couldn’t wait and opened the door.

The sight before him wasn’t the same as when I left for Yangpyeong.

Places where my armor didn’t cover my body were covered in terrible scars.

I treated the wounds with the low ranking Heal, but it wasn’t possible to completely recover.

On top of that, the Lich King armor set that was originally black was glowing red as if someone stamped me with a red seal.

Probably due to the blood that spilled out from Joker and the avatars hardening on me.

I already cleaned off most of the blood on my face and body.

However, Jong Ho’s eyes were filled with regret and sadness as he looked at me.

Jong Ho couldn’t meet my eyes.

Covering his eyes with his hands, he spoke quietly.

“Holy shit... You’ve been through a lot.”

“Why? Don’t I look okay?”

“No... You look okay. Very okay. Did you finish tending to your wounds?”

“Yes. There’s no bleeding or pain. But.....”

I pulled the gauntlet off my left hand.

Guess the blood didn’t harden properly, because it was pretty sticky.

The hand came out with a sickening sticky sound.

The thumb was cut off, and the index finger was missing entirely.

On top of that, the back of the hand was dug in like a crater, almost to the point where the bones and muscles were showing. A new bright pink flesh was barely covering it.

When I stabbed the sword in Joker and pushed him away, the hand that was closest must've blown off.

Showing my left hand to Jong Ho, I gave an awkward smile.

“Somehow it became like this?”

“.....”

“So what happened to the Status Negation skill I asked for?”

“Don't worry, Seokgyu just went out to get it.”

“Aha. It's been only 10 minutes since I asked for it, I guess?”

“Just in case we can't get it, I told him that money isn't the issue and instead get a healer who can cast it, so let's wait for a bit longer.”

“Thanks, hyung.”

“Whew. I can't look at you. Since there's hot water here, you should go wash off. While you do that, I'll go call them.”

“Yes.”

“What kind of an office has a shower?”

While grumbling to myself, I cleaned off my body.

The armor that I wore, as well as Joker's armor and twin swords were taken in.

I wasn't expecting much from them since Joker had taken my Formless Sword Aura with his body.

The condition of the armor should be its worst state possible especially since it was stabbed and cut through countless times.

However, as if to prove my expectations wrong, the armor didn't even have a single scratch on it.

Almost as if the armor repaired itself.

I put the armor and the swords in the corner of the shower room.

After changing into the clothes that Jong Ho brought to me, I headed back into the office.

“Are you done cleaning off?”

“Yes. I feel alive now.”

-Yo! Drop the beat. Shake shake~

“Wait a minute.”

To fill the space that Jong Ho left as he went to take the call, the midget asked me.

“Where did you get a severe wound like this?”

“Ah. While I was hunting, I ran out of mana.”

“Oho.. That could've been really bad.”

“Yes.. That's right.”

“No matter how fast your regen is, you have to be careful.”

“Yes, yes.”

After giving half-baked answers, I ended the conversation with the midget.

Jong Ho was continuing to talk on the phone next to me.

“Yes. Yes. You can come up now.”

By listening in for a bit, I could tell that someone had arrived near here.

‘Has Seokgyu already returned?’

My question didn't last long.

From the hallway, I could hear urgent footsteps.

The door opened, and in came Ho Jin.

Looking at his face, I felt that I had talent for meeting good people.

Jong Ho and Ho Jin. These two should know what the weapon and armor Joker wore do, shouldn't they.

There was a high chance that these two would also have information on this transparent pearl.

Well, I could find out about the sword and armor by wearing them myself.

What I was really curious about was the pearl that Joker tried to find desperately.

It was obvious that it had something extraordinary about it.

After he came in, I gave him the look before he could talk to me.

And I guess he could read the situation, because he confirmed that the midget and the employees here were present.

Coming near me and sitting on the sofa, Ho Jin spoke.

"Did the hunt go well?"

"Yes. It was clean. A full clear, and I brought back all the loot."

"Looking at your wounds, I'm guessing that it wasn't an easy dungeon."

"Yes. I was surprised that I made it out alive."

"You've suffered a lot."

"Yes. Now I think I'm ready to receive it with pride."

"Ah! The ID, right?"

"Yes. Did you bring it with you?"

“Of course!”

Ho Jin pulled out the ID from his inside pocket.

And with a smile that could brighten up the world, he handed it to me.

“Here.”

“I’m glad that I’m able to receive this.”

“Hoho! You’ve accomplished something very big.”

“I only cleared a dungeon. It’s whatever.”

-click

While in the midst of my conversation with Ho Jin was taking place, Seokgyu, who had left to get the Status Negation, had returned.

It looked as though he wasn’t able to get the skill book.

A man was being guided in.

The man looked to be blind.

Even while holding onto Seokgyu’s hand, he was using the other hand to fumble around with the wall.

“Due to today being a market day, there isn’t any items on the market. So I brought someone who can cast it instead.”

“Sorry to call you past midnight. It must be hard on you.”

“Oh. It’s nothing, don’t worry.”

The healer Seokgyu came in together with spoke.

“Who will be the one receiving treatment?”

“Ah! That would be me.”

“How long since the injury?”

“Hm... Around 4 hours ago.”

“As you can tell, I cannot see, so it is difficult for me to revert

special injuries. Because of that, I'll be casting Status Negation to the time before you received the injury. Is that okay?"

"Yes. Doesn't matter to me."

"Then....."

Status Negation could be used once every 24 hours.

Matching the long cool down, the effect was satisfying.

Just like how I received treatment from Park Hyun before, my body recovered to its state 4 hours ago.

Noticing how their duty was fulfilled, the midgets and the employees left the office while handing me the keys.

The midget had quite the good sense to have everyone leave with him, noticing that the others still had more to talk about.

The office now only had Jong Ho, Ho Jin and me in it.

I put the weapon and armor that I took from Joker on the table with a clatter.

It was expected that they would be very surprised when they're explaining the items to me.

But.

"What is this? Armor?"

"Is this what you got from Joker?"

'Huh? This isn't what I was expecting?'

They were asking me with eyes that told me they've never seen these items before.

"Is this the first time you two are seeing something like this?"

"Yep."

"Yes."

“Well, I can find out by wearing these. What about this?”

I put the marble on the table.

Looking at it again from a brightly lit area, it really was a very transparent marble, almost to the point where you couldn't recognize its shape unless the light reflected off of it.

Both their gazes shifted to the marble.

However, neither of them was talking.

“This as well... Is it the first time you're seeing this?”

“I think they sell a lot of them at the stationery store.”

“Hoho. I used to fight a lot with this when I was young. The fond memories are coming back to me”

‘No! You people, I didn't bring this here so you can relive your fond memories!’

“Hyung. You don't know? And you too, mister?”

Jong Ho flung the marble while speaking.

“It's just a marble.”

“Same here. It looks just like that, nothing more.”

It appeared that I wouldn't be getting any information.

I stood up and put on the armor as I explained.

“This is a marble that I took from Joker. He used it when he was about to die... Woah!”

“What? Why are you suddenly doing that?”

“What is this!”

“What's the matter?”

Wearing the armor, I couldn't help but be astonished.

It was because of the armor's ability.

I couldn't help but stare at my status window blankly for a while.

Level: 301

Exp: [11%]

Class: Magician

Special Trait: Mana does not run out.

Strength: 610+300

Mana: ∞

Dexterity: 10+300

Stamina: 910+300

All damage taken reduced by 40%.

“N-No way.”

Look at this crazy armor.

Not only did it raise all stats by 300, but it also reduced all damage taken by 40%.

It wasn't as if I was wearing a full armor set, but this was happening all from a single piece of armor.

Even during Fire Shock's intense flames, this armor survived while everything else was disintegrated into oblivion.

Still, to be this good.

It had the capability of wearing the full Lich King armor set, which included the helm and a full suit of armor.

‘If this armor piece was part of a set, I had to obtain them no matter what.’

If I put this unknown Joker's armor with Lich King set's helm, and then add the Lizardman Gauntlet?

It would be 60% physical resistance with 80% magic resistance.

The reason Joker was able to last so long despite putting all his

points into strength was probably due to this armor's amazing capabilities.

Calming down, I spoke.

“Hyung. Mister.”

“What? What's up?”

“Did the recovery not go as planned?”

“This armor gives 300 points to all stats and has a 40% damage reduction.”

“Hey. This guy is joking around the moment he comes back to life. You goofball!”

“Despite working for the association for 20 years, I never heard of such powerful defensive equipment.”

“It's hard for me to believe too, but it's the truth.”

Since they didn't believe till the end, I ended up lending the armor for them to wear.

Only after that did Jong Ho and Ho Jin had their mouths opened in awe.

Due to the expectations from the armor piece set, I excitedly held the twin sword.

But despite holding onto Joker's twin sword, no stat points rose.

It wasn't just for me, but the same case for these two sitting next to me.

It was just like when I tried to learn the skill beyond ranking and it didn't respond.

I asked Jong Ho and Ho Jin to find information regarding the twin sword and marble.

If it's these two, they should be able to ask around to find

something at least similar to these.

I got lucky killing Joker and now I had this armor in my possession.

As I promised myself before when I steeled my resolve, I was going to get stronger to the point where I can beat luck itself.

I had just barely gone over this mountain called Joker just now.

With this ID that would let me in anywhere and the fly that was bothering me gone, I was going to focus only on hunting.

“From tomorrow on, it’s hunting time!”

Chapter 71 - The Land Where None Have Stepped On

-yawn~

-CRASH!

-CRACK!

“KWAAAKK!”

The continued clears of the level 28 dungeon made me yawn.

The anxiety I had before was nowhere to be found.

It was a sad story for the lizardmen that were being annihilated without a trace before me, but it was at the point where it was annoying me.

They were being evaporated instantly by the constant barrage of level 200 Meteors.

With just Mana Shield, I didn't even need to think about defending.

It was as if I went back to the past to solve math problems at elementary school.

I was obtaining sufficient amounts of experience, but I wasn't satisfied with just this.

Humans are a type of animal that constantly seeks new and thrilling experiences.

And soon, I'd have to return to school.

My time for hunting would decrease.

That was why I felt greed for something beyond the level 28 dungeon.

Despite the time required to hunt decreasing, I was searching for something that would let me grow even faster.

After I finished hunting, I was planning to head to the succubi dungeon where Jong Ho and Ho Jin were waiting.

There was something I wanted to ask the two of them.

Recently, I had visited the level 30 dungeon.

I already knew that physical attacks do not affect monsters in the level 28 to level 30 dungeons.

Mankind had made it to the level 30 dungeon where magical attacks still worked.

Perhaps my hopes were too high, but it was a huge letdown.

The number of monsters, drops, and even experience were all less than the level 28 dungeon despite the monsters being bigger and stronger.

I learned the reason why magician rankers preferred the level 28 dungeon.

Thus I planned to go to dungeons level 31 and beyond.

If possible, a dungeon level 34 and above where magic attacks worked!

Humankind had set up dungeons up to level 32, so there was a lot of information regarding the monsters and drops for them.

However, there was no information regarding all the dungeons beyond that, no, even on the portals beyond that.

I was taking the first step into uncharted territory that no one has been to before.

I poured the blood stones that filled my backpack into the counter machine.

In just a single day, I had gathered this much.

To avoid suspicion, I went through many different stores.

By the time I returned to the first store I visited, I could tell that a month had passed.

While selling Awakened essences, something of interest occurred.

“Guess it’s bothersome to visit every day?”

“Yes. It’s a lot more convenient to sell a month’s worth in one go.”

“A lot of people do that. Here. The statement of accounts.”

“Thank you. By the way, do you sell anything similar to a marble?”

“A marble....”

I was trying to obtain information regarding the transparent marble.

Even Ho Jin, who had been in the association for a long time, could not obtain information regarding it.

With the help of his ex-subordinate, he said that he was continuing to look through the files.

After a long period of thinking, the store owner opened his mouth.

“Are you talking about the stat resetting marble?”

“Oh? Can you show it to me?”

“Whew. Despite running this shop here for 22 years, I have never seen it myself. It does exist, but it’s so rare that it might as well not exist.”

‘Is it like a girlfriend or something?’

Immediately I searched for stat resetting marble on my smartphone.

However, I was disappointed by the few images that appeared.

From the search result, all it showed was a marble with a deep shade of purple.

“Ah... is there anything else than this?”

“Yes. From what I know, there isn't anything else like it.”

“I understand. Farewell then.”

“Yes. Come back soon.”

While I was heading to the succubi dungeon, I was fumbling with the marble in my pocket.

I had even thought about just consuming it.

However, it could be something that Joker planned to use to suicide so he could avoid interrogation by torture.

My bet was that it was for some kind of recovery buff, but until I had reliable information, I couldn't just put it in my mouth.

On top of that, it could be something that you don't eat.

“Today's a dead end too.”

While taking in the fresh night air, I arrived at the dungeon.

Despite how late it was, many warrior class Awakened were gathered.

Of course, a few of the royalty tanker and healer classes were there too.

Far away, I could spot Jong Ho and Ho Jin walking together towards me.

“What's up!”

“Yo! Hyung! Hello mister.”

“You've arrived.”

“Yes. Shall we go to a deserted location first?”

“Yes. Let's do that.”

“Hey, do you not even wear armor while you hunt now?”

Looking around my surroundings, I answered with a whisper.

“I don’t even need to in the level 28 dungeon. Does hyung or mister want to wear it instead?”

“Aigo, no way. You’ll be going to places beyond that soon.”

“I’ll pass as well.”

I found myself thinking that these two are similar to the point of being scary.

It was almost like a union of the sweet potatoes.

One good thing out of this was that it seemed neither of them would get tired of each other’s personalities.

We headed for what has now become our base of operations, the midget’s office.

“Dark Lady.....”

The radical faction’s overboss, Zekill.

He spoke as he pressed firmly on his temples.

In front of him stood Dark Lady, who had taken the first place in the radical faction in the struggle for dominance with the success of the portal explosion experiment.

At Zekill’s call was the immediately reply of Dark Lady.

“Yes!”

“Have you not found Joker’s whereabouts yet?”

“Yes. He left on a personal errand and has not established contact as of yet. It’s been that way for a while.”

“What’s the chance that Joker has been done in by someone?”

“Highly unlikely. For someone like Joker who has that much power, it would take a majority of the association’s ranker hunters

to take him down. Without that much manpower being deployed, it would be too difficult to fight against him. But from what I learned, the association has not made any moves.”

“Are you absolutely sure?”

“Yes. The association’s president himself has reported to me.”

“I see.”

“There is one thing I am suspicious of.....”

“What is it?”

“I’ve been using Necklace of Searching that I own every three hours in an attempt to locate Joker.”

“.....”

“However, Joker was not found. Even until now, after I’ve used up all the Necklace of Searching, not once was he found.”

Necklace of Searching.

It was a single use equipment that when worn, it would locate the Awakened that the user thought of on a map.

With a ridiculously low drop rate and a onetime use restriction on it, it was an item with an enormous value.

There was a skill in the executioner class that gave off the same effect, but the class was incredibly rare and the mana expenditure was incredibly high, so it was rarely used.

As if annoyed by her talks that danced around the main point, Zekill raised his voice and asked.

“So what are you trying to say!”

“As I have told you, the chance that Joker was done in by someone is zero. The only possibility left would be...”

“Are you saying that he went in there?”

“Yes. That’s correct. Looking at the current situation so far,

there is no other explanation.”

A dungeon and portal that’s completely in another world.

If he was in another world, it was impossible for any skill or item to pinpoint his location.

Restraining his boiling temper, Zekill quietly muttered to himself.

“What were you thinking, Joker.....”

“.....”

“Did he tell you that he was heading there?”

“No. I’ve heard no such thing.”

“Damn... I’ll order Ghost to supply you with more Necklaces of Searching. Continue so that you can locate his position.”

“Yes, Lord Zekill!”

“Despite the additional task, do not stray away from the current project at hand.”

“Of course.”

“Dark Lady... Soon, the world will change. To the new world that’s approaching, I will not forget your accomplishments towards it.”

Finishing the conversation, Zekill headed for the Warp that was formed in the corner of Dark Lady’s home office.

Until Zekill’s form completely disappeared, Dark Lady did not raise her head and continued to pay her respects.

‘Joker... You fool. Was all you could think to do was to go in there?’

At last, we arrived at the midget’s office.

It seemed that there was not a better place to talk in secret than

here.

Three men were laid back in a relaxed manner on the sofa.

After taking a rare break, I spoke first.

“A level 34 would be difficult, right?”

“Yikes! Why are you saying that suddenly?”

“Well, I’m trying to find a location that would help me grow stronger faster than the level 28 dungeon.”

“But why are you trying to suddenly skip all the way to a level 34 dungeon?”

“I own way more magic skills than physical attack skills. Also the area of effect is far larger, and the damage is superior.”

“Even so, there are only dungeons up to level 32. Isn’t that true, mister?”

“Ah... That’s right. Humankind has only set up dungeons up to level 32 portals.”

“I already know that. But there has to be portals even if there are no dungeons. Doesn’t it work out if I clear those portals and turn them into dungeons?”

“Whew. You’re a scary one. You’re right, but it’s probably going to be very difficult to find such a portal. There’s no way that portals that hid for 34 years are common.”

“Hm... Unless it’s in the abyss of the sea or deep in the mountains, it would be difficult to find, right?”

“With all that you’ve done, now you want to dive and hike to hunt?”

“Guess I have to go all the way to Yangpyeong to search....”

It was then. I saw a crafty look in Ho Jin’s eyes.

It was definitely a look that said that he knew something.

I faced towards Ho Jin and gave him the expression of a child looking at cotton candy.

“Mister! You do know something, right?”

“Aigo, guess I wasn’t able to hide my facial expression.”

“Do you know? Where a level 34 portal would be?”

“Hoho. Just as you’ve guessed, I do know the location of a level 34 portal. I’ve seen it reported in a classified document that can be only accessed by department heads and above.”

“Oho. Where would that be?”

“The place you mentioned before, in Yangpyeong.”

“As expected. That’s why the citizens were evacuated and the association building was put out of commission?”

“Yes. That’s correct.”

“Hyung, do you have a lot of fuel in the car?”

“Hey! I’m aging because of you. Alright, let’s get going.”

“I’ll go home real quick to equip my gear and come back.”

“Is this the place?”

“Yes. That’s correct.”

We’ve arrived at Yangpyeong. In front of us was an abandoned mine shaft.

The entrance of the mine was completely blocked off by someone’s previous efforts.

Without any hesitation, I pried open the entrance.

-CREEEAK!

It was an incredibly thick sheet of sturdy metal, but for me, it was as difficult as folding paper.

Since I needed to repair it later as to not leave any traces, I pried it just enough to get through.

Jong Ho's car was covered with a black sheet as to hide it, and we continued forward.

"Let's go!"

"Yep. Come back soon."

"Hoho....."

"Huh? Please accompany me at least to the interior of the mine. It's dark and scary."

"Ah. Alright. We can do that."

"Mister, hyung, let's go."

"Yes. Let's do so."

The moment Ho Jin and Jong Ho entered the mine shaft...

-CREEEAK!

"Hey! Why are you closing that!"

"Kuku. Since we all came here already, the three of us should go together."

"This is crazy. Really."

It didn't take long after entering the abandoned mine shaft to find the portal.

An oval shaped purple portal. There were exactly 34 growth rings. Thus, it was definitely a level 34 portal.

Lastly, I opened up my status window to check on my equipment.

"I'll go in first. Since we don't have any information, it could be dangerous."

"Isn't it dangerous for you too?"

"I'll probably be fine?"

“Well, I admit you probably would be. Be careful though.”

“Yes.”

-whoosh

“Oho.... Looks like it’ll be a good time?”

Chapter 72 - The Land Where None Have Stepped On (2)

The dungeon I entered was like a track field covered in a layer of snow.

The walls and ceiling too. It was almost as if someone painted everything in pure white.

It was to the point where it was hard to believe that any monsters were in here.

I couldn't even tell where it ended.

Since the walls and floor wasn't distinctly separated, I wouldn't be able to tell that this was the entrance without touching the wall behind me.

-CRASH!

-BOOM! BOOM!

I spammed fire attribute magic such as Explosion and Meteor around the entrance.

It served the same purpose as the bread crumbs in Hansel and Gretel.

Soot and blackened dirt were left at the entrance because I really did think I could possibly lose my way in this dungeon.

The current situation was that I had zero intel on this level 34 portal.

Firstly, I headed towards the 9 o'clock bearing relative to the entrance in order to check the strength of the monsters.

Since it was highly dangerous to run forward recklessly and aggro a bunch of monsters to herd them before taking them down without a plan, I planned to check the strength of the monsters before coming up with a course of action.

Casting the instant cast Explosion around me, I continued forward.

It was also to confirm one end of this dungeon, where a wall would be.

-BOOM!

“Hm? Did I already reach it?”

It didn't even take 3 minutes before Explosion is burning on the wall in front of me.

Despite being only a short distance and time, I wondered how come I didn't see a single monster.

I guess the level 18 dungeon was similar with the griffon and poison naga, only 20 monsters or so appearing inside the dungeon.

My suspicion lasted only a moment, and I continued to head deeper into the dungeon.

Towards 12 o'clock. Then turning to 3 o'clock.

Like that, I went full circle back to the marked entrance after covering a square piece of the dungeon.

Despite going in a circle for 15 minutes, not only did I not see a single monster, but I couldn't even hear their howling either.

I felt like something was off.

“Perhaps.....”

The worry I felt made me wonder if it was possible for the monsters to be stealthed.

Because of that, I've been casting single fire magic continuously until now.

All the stealth skills used by the Awakened become undone when hit by attacks or the duration runs out.

The monsters up to now haven't used any stealth skills, but I didn't know what could happen here.

I casted Eye of Insight.

"I had my doubts, but it's true."

The center of the dungeon.

A lot of red dots were there.

Eye of Insight showed stealthed targets, but when used on monsters, it also showed their weaknesses.

All those red spots that I could see must be their weaknesses displayed to me.

And since they were stealthed, their form would become visible to me as well.

I ran forward to the center where they were gathered.

In the center, monsters were moving in pairs of 2 to 3.

They didn't move in any predictable patterns, resembling feathers swaying in the wind.

I looked at them carefully.

"What should I call them...?"

Keeping a sufficient amount of distance, the form I gazed upon was something so vague that it was hard to describe with words.

It didn't have a solid form, and it was hard to call it a lifeform of any kind.

If I have to put it into words, something that looks similar to the oval portal I've entered through?

Yeah. They looked like sky blue pastel colored portals, floating in the air.

I couldn't feel any threatening pressure from them.

On top of that, they seemed to go along with the dungeon's

background so well that I felt like they were ornaments.

The red dots were on the center of their bodies.

It was the weakness that the Eye of Insight was showing me.

If I focused my attacks on that location, I should be able to take them down faster.

“Shall I see how well you fight?”

I casted Lightning Spray towards 3 monsters separated from the main group.

-ZAAP!

Lightning Spray hit dead center.

The enormous amount of electricity not only hit them, but was flowing through them.

However, it didn't seem that it took much damage.

Afterwards, they began to head towards me.

However, they moved at speeds far slower than what anyone could have imagined.

They flew towards me at the speed of a trolley.

Every time they moved, they gave off a static like sound that would get on one's nerves.

Looking at how they moved, I couldn't help but laugh.

“I'm not sure who made you, but they must've dozed off when they did.”

They had finally arrived near me.

Then.

-ZAAP!

“What the!”

My Mana Shield shook violently.

A massive amount of electricity had poured towards me.

It was the exact same Lightning Spray that I had casted moments ago.

Also, its form was that of a level 200 Lightning Spray.

“It copies the attack it receives?”

Unless they copied an attack that was beyond ranking, it wouldn't go through Mana Shield.

To understand more about them, I began to follow up with stronger attack skills.

I used Explosion and Holy Missile once each on them.

-BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The result was the same.

They fired back the attack they received.

“You passed up to A ranking single fire attacks. How about this one?”

The surround area was covered in a transparent fire.

Perfect for disposing corpses... I mean, a high damage spell called Fire Shock.

The egotistical lizardmen that possessed immunity towards physical damage and even a little magical resistance had received massive amounts of damage by Fire Shock.

However, not only did they received it with their whole body, but they were absorbing it, making some kind of screeching scream.

“KEERIIICK!”

“Oho? Looks like this one hurt? And their size shrunk a bit.”

Their height, which was similar to mine, seemed to shrink by a bit.

It seemed that the more damage they took, the smaller they became.

“So they aren’t able to reflect attacks beyond A ranking AoE attack ski-...”

-WOOSH!

As if making fun of me and ignoring my words, massive amounts of fire poured down on me.

“Aren’t they a taunting bunch? I don’t think I’ll be satisfied until I crush them. Time to stop playing around. It’s time for total annihilation!”

-CRASH!

-BOOM!

My strongest attack skill, Meteor Call. I spammed it down on them.

The pure white dungeon was covered in black flames.

Everywhere, chunks of the intense flames were scattered about.

“KE-KE-KEERICK.”

Once again, they emitted a sound similar to that of mice.

Around 6 to 7 Meteors later, their sizes shrunk to that of peas.

My guess was that the next Meteor would be the last one I needed to cast before they were annihilated.

-CRASH!

Just as I predicted, they returned 3 times the amount of presents I gave them.

My Mana Shield shook more than any attack I’ve received with it so far.

Mana Shield depleted mana instead of health equivalent to the damage taken.

It was okay because my mana was infinite, but if it wasn't, even Yoon Jong-sun would be annihilated on the spot if he was to receive this kind of attack.

The damage from the level 200 Meteor Call that hasn't existed in this world before was absolutely insane after all.

Then.

[Experience 2,000,000 obtained.]

[Experience 2,000,000 obtained.]

[Experience 2,000,000 obtained.]

“Wait. Why are there so many zeroes? One, ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand..... Millions?”

“Wait a min. How many are there?”

Roughly 30 red dots were present.

Each gave out 2,000,000 experience?

60,000,000 experience if I get all the monsters in the dungeon?

I remembered the saying ‘The dungeon is large and the experience is amazing.’

Currently my level was 315.

Like a snowball rolled atop of a hill adding up as it went down, the experience pool I required to level had reached to the point of requiring 230,000,000.

However, each time I defeat all the monsters in here, I gain 60,000,000.

Thus, I would be able to level up once by clearing this dungeon 4 times.

“Guess I’m not sleeping today.”

I defeated all the monsters inside and exited.

All of them were gathered in the center.

When I cleared the dungeon, an exit had appeared in the center of the dungeon.

I saw Jong Ho and Ho Jin sitting in front of the portal, letting out smoke from their cigars.

Seeing me appear, Jong Ho fanned away the smoke with his hand and spoke.

“Came out faster than I expected.”

“What. Why do you sound like you weren’t worried at all?”

“Huh! What are you saying. I was definitely worried.”

“Doesn’t sound like it.”

“Hey! I was very worried for the monsters inside. The monster butcherer had entered, so how could I not be worried for them?”

“Hohoho. I was also hoping that you wouldn’t be covered in too much blood as well when you came out.”

“I didn’t do that. Not at all! Also, the dungeon here is a lot cleaner than I thought.”

“Really?”

“Yes. Not a drop of blood even after hitting the monsters until they are annihilated. And of course, they still drop bloodstones.”

“Oho... How are the monsters? Do you think they’ve become a lot stronger?”

“Hm... I think it’ll be best if you two come in first and see for yourselves.”

Taking a step backwards, Ho Jin spoke.

“... Do I have to go as well?”

“Of course mister, you have to come as well!”

“Then... let me make one phone call to someone at home... Ahh!”

I pulled Jong Ho and Ho Jin by their hands.

Since the portal was cleared already, the shape was changed to that of a dungeon entrance.

However, I could enter it right away since there was no intercom or a fingerprint scanner I'd have to go through.

It was equivalent to a theme park that didn't require an entry ticket.

Just like that, the three of us entered.

"Is this okay like this?"

"My words....."

"Did you level up a lot?"

"After 27 years, I have reached level 100."

"Oh! I just hit level 100 as well."

In just 3 hours, both mid-level 80s had reached level 100.

Despite the experience being split between three people, each clear gave 20,000,000.

20,000,000 experience every 10 min. It was an amount that was hard to believe even for me, so I was wondering how these two felt.

Looking at how these two were staring blankly into space as if they had lost all awareness, I had a feeling that I understood a little bit.

"Hey. Min-Cheol. You told us to stay put so I'm doing that but I have to ask. I only see the explosive Meteors and I don't see anything, but why are we obtaining a ridiculous amount of experience?"

"Same here. I can't see the monsters."

"The monsters here are stealthed. Even if I use Eye of Insight,

hyung and mister aren't able to see them."

"A monster that uses stealth? But it looks like you're the only one attacking. Aren't these monsters weak?"

"Ah, that's probably because you can only see the Meteor. They perfectly copy the skills I use and return the attack. Even the skill level is copied."

"Wow... If I get closer to spectate, I don't think I could stand up due to my fear."

"Right. Mister! You said that you would call your wife?"

"Ah. Nope. No news is good news."

"Pfft. Since you already came out all the way here with me, collect some rewards before you go."

"I'm always thankful. But Min-Cheol, I don't think I can pass this up."

"I-I will also be in your care for a bit."

"Now you two sound like real people! Let's go!"

Just like that, a crazy leveling spree unlike anything in the world began.

Chapter 73 - It Is Slowly Being Solved

The hunt with Jong Ho and Ho Jin allowed them to hit level 110 in a single day.

Despite the giant leap in growth, they decided not to graduate from the succubus dungeon, but instead clear it as a duo since they would receive a far greater amount of experience from the level 14 succubus dungeon with its numerous monsters rather than the level 15 dungeon.

They continued to grow stronger in preparation for the level 19 dungeon they would be going to later.

They were in the same boat as me.

With Banwol Jincheon's in each hand, they looked energetic as they entered the dungeon.

It's been two days since I headed for the level 34 dungeon.

As usual, I casted Warp to head to the desolate region.

Since I hunted for over 12 hours, the cooldown of Warp wasn't important.

The Warp skill had levels and experience, but one would wonder why because despite the levels increasing, the cooldown didn't decrease and nothing changed.

A dungeon that did not require anything for entry.

And a difficulty that was so high, it couldn't be cleared by anyone but me.

You could say it was a dungeon just for me.

I mean, the monsters replicate the same attack it receives.

On top of that, it takes 10 A+ ranking attack skills to destroy them.

Of course, other Awakened magicians could attack, but it would

be impossible for them to receive the replicated counter attack.

If I did not have infinite mana and Mana Shield, it would be impossible for me as well.

I didn't let the feeling of superiority stay for long.

Suddenly, I felt a sense of dread.

What if level 34 portals that may exist all over the place suddenly explode?

Just like how the first level 29 portal exploded recently, it wouldn't end easily.

It would cause chaos and destruction far greater than when the portals first began forming 40 years ago.

Shaking off the heavy feeling in my heart that I didn't know why I felt, I focused on hunting.

The only item that dropped in this dungeon were bloodstones.

Since no bosses appeared after each clear, I assumed that there was a hidden boss.

The encounter rate would be probably the same as the ones I've met so far.

So 5 days of hunting wouldn't be enough.

It wouldn't appear that easily.

Only the reverberation from Meteor Call could be heard in the dungeon.

All the Meteor Calls I cast plus 30 monsters casting them back.

The force of impact and flames were enough to deform the dungeon's interior.

It didn't take 5 minutes to turn the snow white dungeon into a demolished field.

I thought to use Iceberg to try preventing their counterattacks,

but since it could serve as obstacles for me if they do succeed in returning them, I avoided doing so.

“My Mana Shield is shaking so much that I can barely see in front of me.”

I couldn't see their forms, but I was targeting the red dots that I could see from Eye of Insight with Meteors.

Between the red dots, I could see something floating.

Almost like a zebra stuck in a crowd of oxen.

It was only after the 30 monsters perishing and the Meteor attacks to finish before I could see it.

“Awakened Essence?”

Amongst the bloodstones was an Awakened Essence.

I wasn't very excited because I had already gathered plenty using the Lizardman Gauntlets.

If there is one thing that was surprising, it was that the essence that you can only get from bosses dropped from a regular monster, I guess?

However, you could tell it was shaped differently from regular essences if you looked up close.

A regular essence would be roughly the size of a thumb with the colors of the rainbow, and the surface was smooth like a pebble.

However, the item in my hand had a different shape.

Despite that, I still believed it to be an Awakened Essence.

“The once smooth surface is rough.... But I'm pretty sure it's still an Awakened Essence.”

It was a pointless thought, but I had doubts that this could possibly be a defective item.

Probably because the shape was different.

“For now, let’s try using it.”

It wasn’t that dangerous because Awakened Essences weren’t orally consumed, but used like skill books where you put it on your chest and confirm after you hear the sound from the system.

How nice would it be if the transparent marble I got from Joker worked the same way.

I held the essence to my chest.

[Please select the skill to Awaken]

“Hm... guess this is an essence.”

I did hear the narration to pick the skill I want to Awaken.

The shape was different, but I was sure that it was an Awakened Essence.

Since I didn’t think of a skill ahead to Awaken, I chose the Frost Orb that I did not Awaken even after hitting level 100 on it, and held the essence on my chest once more.

[Ineligible skill for Awakening]

“Huh?”

Frost Orb had definitely hit level 100.

Despite the skill ranking being so low, it should be possible to Awaken.

But almost as if the essence was picky of the ranks, it refused.

“So it is defective. Maybe I should smash it with Meteor.”

[Will you Awaken Meteor Call?]

“.... What is it saying? I already Awakened Meteor a long time ago.”

Before I threw the Awakened Essence to the ground in frustration, I stopped for a second.

And looking at the defective stone held in my hand, I thought for

a bit.

This is the level 34 dungeon, something that humankind hadn't been able to approach.

Other than the bloodstones, information on the items that drop here isn't found anywhere.

You could tell just from the monsters shaped like portals, because they aren't named.

And this was the essence I obtained from a place like this.

Everyone knew that the max level of the skill was level 200.

But what if there are levels beyond that?

Perhaps it was possible to raise the level of a skill beyond 200 with this essence.

“Like the transparent marble, with each passing day, more questions crop up.”

It would be impossible to get information on this from anyone.

It was something only I could solve on my own.

I could level up the skills without much difficulty due to my infinite mana.

If it's a skill without cooldowns, I could master it in about four to five days at the most.

But I can't let this get in the way of hunting I need right now.

“A skill that's level 200 but doesn't affect my hunting much. And since it could fail, a skill with no cooldowns so I can level it up quickly would be best.”

Looking at the skill menu, I made my choice.

“I'll pick Eye of Insight.”

What if this defective essence really allows for a skill to Awaken another time?

You could say that I've made a huge mistake, since I used it on a support skill rather than on an attack skill.

But instead of having something yet being unable to use it due to not knowing how it works, it would be better to at least experiment like this.

I had no regrets with my choice.

[Will you Awaken Eye of Insight?]

I heard the narration and agreed without any hesitation.

The stone gave off bright light and immediately dissipated.

Opening the skill menu again, I was surprised.

-Eye of Insight ** Lv. 1 [0%]

“That’s crazy. Two stars....”

“Hyung. Shall we call it a day?”

Jong Ho spoke to Ho Jin while wiping the blood off his sword and armor.

Hunting with Min-Cheol had allowed him to hit level 110, which made him very satisfied of his growth.

It was a growth that would normally take a year, but he had achieved it in a single day.

It was the same with Ho Jin.

Ho Jin answered Jong Ho after confirming that he finished wiping the blood off his wristwatch.

“Should we?”

“Since the weekend starts tomorrow, do you want to have some soju someplace?”

“Hoho. If my wife knew, I’d be in a lot of trouble...”

“Then you want to head in early?”

“It’ll probably be okay if I just take a small sip?”

“Of course! Let’s go, hyung-nim!”

Both of them headed for the small food cart next to the dungeon.

Since it was already late, many Awakened were taking their fill after finishing their hunt.

The two sat at a corner, ordering soju and a light meal. While they waited, they continued the conversation.

Jong Ho spoke as if whispering first.

“What about the surveillance?”

He was probably talking about the surveillance that stuck to him daily after he quit the association.

Probably heard about it in the car when Min-Cheol left to fight with Joker.

Ho Jin spoke as he chewed on a cucumber in front of him.

“There’s none today.”

“Since it’s Friday, they must’ve left work early?”

“Hohoho! Could be. Right. Isn’t Min-Cheol just about done with hunting? Why don’t you give him a call?”

“Eh. Unless I contact him first, he usually doesn’t call.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes. He must be very busy.”

“Well, that’s true.”

“He said he needs to go to school soon, so he’s doing his best.”

“Hm? School?”

“Yes. He says he can’t do anything about it because it’s mandatory.”

“Oho. I’ll take care of that myself. In this situation, school isn’t

that important, right?”

“Ah! I think Min-Cheol will be very happy. First, take a glass, hyung-nim.”

That started the road down both of them becoming very drunk.

The bottles of soju were already increasing from 4 to 5.

Slurring his speech, Jong Ho asked Ho Jin.

“Hyung.”

“Hm?”

“Where do we go from here?”

“Where we go? What?”

“Well. While our little sibling who is much younger than us is fighting tooth and nail, can we afford to just stand idly by like this. That’s what I mean.”

“Hm... Why are you helping Min-Cheol?”

“I feel bad for him. He’s so young. Thanks to all those greedy bastards around trying to use him for their greed.... Sometimes he’s scary, but he’s a lot younger than we think.”

“.....”

“Radical faction? Government? I don’t care about all that. It’s because he’s like a little sibling to me.”

“The only thing we can do for him is provide information. No matter how much we try to grow, we can’t match those bastards.”

“True. Information. But even that marble. No matter how much we search, there’s nothing. Even looking through books resulted in nothing. It feels like we can’t even provide that help for him anymore.”

“....”

“But I feel bad just hunting together with him. What should we

do, hyung-nim?”

Drinking the soju in his glass, Ho Jin was about to continue talking.

But then.

“Aigo. What occasion is it that you’re having alcohol?”

Bringing a chair between the two to sit was Min-Cheol.

This situation was awkward no matter how you looked at it, so Min-Cheol turned to look at Jong Ho and Ho Jin back and forth.

His face flushing bright red, Jong Ho spoke.

“Oh! Bro, what’s up?”

“Yo. Bro what’s up.”

“Bro. What does hyung do now?”

“Why ask?”

“This hyung isn’t useful to you anymore.”

“Mister. Did Jong Ho-hyung drink a lot?”

“Hoho. I didn’t make him drink.”

Min-Cheol heard what Jong Ho said from Ho Jin.

All the worry and how apologetic Jong Ho felt.

Listening to whole story, Min-Cheol spoke.

“Hyung. Should I get you to snap out of your drunkenness?”

“Ah! Are you trying to hit hyung or something!”

Min-Cheol laughed for a bit at the funny face Jong Ho was making before pulling something out of his pocket and spoke.

“From what I heard, I understand why Jong Ho-hyung is being like this. I think I found the solution just now?”

“What are you saying?”

“Should we go tomorrow morning after you snap out of your

drunkenness? Or should we go now?”

“What! Let’s go now! Second round let’s go!”

“Hoho. Let’s go now then. But where...?”

“There it is. The level 14 dungeon.”

“Huh? Why the dungeon that we’ve been hunting in until now...”

“You’ll know when you go.”

-beep. beep. beep.

Just like that, the three of them entered the dungeon.

Chapter 74 - Level Up for You and Me

We entered the dungeon after cleaning up the mess of alcohol in the cart.

Ho Jin naturally followed into the dungeon at my request.

Jong Ho had his eyes half open in a drunken stupor.

“Ho Jin hyung! Why did we go to the dungeon for our second round of drinking! And it’s not been long since we just finished hunting.... Hic!”

“Woah... I think we’ll have to put Jong Ho hyung to sleep first?”

“Hoho. I think he’s pretty drunk. But Min-Cheol, why did we come to the dungeon?”

“Ah.”

I handed the ring on my finger to Ho Jin and spoke.

Instead of explaining with words, it would be faster if he saw it firsthand.

“This. This is the solution to our problem.”

“Huh? This ring is?”

“What? Me too! I want to put the ring on too!”

“Do you have tranquilizer gun? If not, maybe with brute force... But I’m not sure if I can control my strength.”

“Oh no. That would be very bad. You can just lend him the Titan Boots that you are wearing for a bit. Since being drunk also counts as a status effect.”

“Oh... So there was such a method. Then shall we try it?”

I took off the Titan Boots and had Jong Ho wear them.

Suddenly, Jong Ho snapped out of his stupor almost as if he had never been drunk in the first place.

I spoke to him, who was looking around confusedly as if he had come back from time traveling.

“Are you okay now?”

“Oh. When did Min-Cheol arrive? Isn’t this the level 14 dungeon? I’m sure that I was in the middle of drinking with Ho Jin hyung...”

“That’s not important right now. You can look for the lost films of your memory later. First, take a look at this.”

“What’s so important?”

“Mister, you have the Piercing Sword, right?”

“Yes, I do have it.”

“I’ll draw a few succubi over here, so will you cast it for me? It’ll help in understanding the ability of the ring.”

Finishing my explanation, I cast Mass Stealth Jutsu on Jong Ho and Ho Jin, and then charged at the succubi.

I saw a decently sized group.

Using Explosion, I pulled their aggro.

Despite how Explosion shouldn’t disappear until the target was burnt into nothingness, it must feel like an annoying fly due to their 100% magic resistance.

I received the attacks with my Mana Shield until I got to the entrance.

I spoke to the stealthed Ho Jin.

“Mister. Try using Piercing Sword.”

“Yes. Will do.”

Since it was a skill that only hit the selected targets of the wielder, Ho Jin prepared to cast Piercing Sword without much hesitation.

I wouldn’t be targeted after all.

Even if it hit me, I wouldn't receive any major damage.

Roughly a hundred Banwol Jincheons floated behind Ho Jin and flew towards the succubi.

With the attack, Ho Jin's stealth broke and the succubi screamed out pain as they bled.

"You have to at least leave one!"

"Yes."

"Mister. What's your skill level right now?"

"32. Thanks to the recent leveling and Banwol Jincheon, they die in about two hits."

"Hm... The mana cost is roughly 10% of max mana, right?"

"That's correct."

I stepped on the corpses of the dead succubi lying around, and it didn't take long for them to turn into Revival Succubi.

To take out the revived succubi, a total of 50% mana was used, in other words, 5 Piercing Swords were cast.

Even if they both spent all their mana, it was be too much for Jong Ho and Ho Jin to defeat the incubus in one go, since that boss would revive all the succubi in the dungeon.

"Now, try wearing the ring I gave you."

Jong Ho, who was looking at the entire situation quietly, spoke up in a whining manner.

Since the situation was being dragged away from drinking into the dungeon with Ho Jin, after all.

"Hey. Are you here to spy on our hunting?"

"No way. I'm here to solve your worries."

"I've equipped it."

It was a ring without any patterns or indentations, half

transparent and green.

“Is there any change in your stat window?”

“No. Is it a ring with stats? It feels like I’ve just put on a grandma’s garakji ring? Hoho.....” “Now, please hold onto Banwol Jincheon with the hand that has the ring equipped and wait a bit. I’ll be pulling the succubi again.”

“Yes... I’ll do that.”

Ho Jin’s face was filled with questions as he answered me.

I pulled hundreds of succubi within the dungeon.

Flapping their wings, they chased in a line without end.

Confirming my actions, Jong Ho and Ho Jin couldn’t hide their nervous looks as they clenched their swords.

The monsters neared as they simultaneously poured their attacks on me.

I spoke towards the very nervous looking Ho Jin.

“Mister. Focus as hard as you can on the ring and cast Piercing Sword.”

“Focus on the ring?”

“Yes. You have to continue focusing on it.”

“Min-Cheol, please take the Banwol Jincheon. Ho Jin hyung is almost out of mana, so it’s probably better that you take care of them?”

“Observe carefully, hyung-nim.”

Summoned around Ho Jin was a sword aura that couldn’t even be compared to the previous one.

On top of that, the red smoke that was coming off made it impossible to not notice the destructive force behind it.

It was because a level 200 Awakened Piercing Sword was

summoned on standby to annihilate the enemy.

“Wha... What is this!”

“... I’m not sure of it either.”

“Try attacking now, with the goal of leaving roughly two of them alive.”

-SLICE!

Only the sound of the air splitting apart was heard.

However, all the succubi in the vicinity were annihilated before they could even utter a scream.

It was the same with the ones that regenerated.

There was no point to them rising up, as they met the cold floor once more.

“Im... Impossible.”

“How did this happen? Isn’t this an Awakened Piercing Sword?”

The name of the ring was called Balrok’s Treasure Storage.

It wasn’t a ring with an ability that raised any defensive or offensive stats.

It had a far more powerful ability.

It allowed one to save skills into the ring, including the level of the skill.

There was no limit as to how many you could store.

You’re probably wondering how I found out the ability of the ring, since there was no information out there regarding the ring that drops from the level 34 hidden dungeon boss.

It was thanks to the Eye of Insight.

After the skill went through a second Awakening via the defective Awakening Essence, the skill gained the ability to identify objects on top of the original effect of seeing through

stealth and identifying weak points.

Just by casting the skill and looking at objects, I would be able to discover the ability of the object and how to use it.

Thus, I would be able to identify all the loot I get from now on with this.

I was trying to Awaken a skill that wasn't all that important to hunting, but I scored a pretty powerful ability in the process.

“What about your mana?”

“Seems I have 50% left... It didn't go down at all except for what I used before.”

“What? Your mana wasn't consumed?”

“How about that? Guess your worries are solved now, hyung?”

“It's a ring that allows me to use Awakened Piercing Sword?”

“No. It allows me to store any skill I can use.”

“I've never heard of a ring that has that ability.”

“Same here.”

“I've put in roughly 100 Piercing Swords in there. Now, you just have to take out a Piercing Sword from the ring each time you hunt.”

“.....”

“.....”

They couldn't help but stare at me blankly, absolutely speechless. I couldn't help but laugh, since they looked so funny.

“Ah. I'll put in Meteor or Iceberg, as well as the whole lot in there, so once you level up enough to have the defensive capabilities, go enter the dungeons that require magic attacks. The wearer can check how many spells are left for each type, so get some refills from me time to time. It would be great if it could store

shields as well, but seems it can't."

"S-Sure..."

"Yes... I understand..."

"Since the two of you hunt together, I think one will be enough. But if another drops, I'll give it to you. And that's the end of the new product showcasing. Let's go!"

Just like that, the explanation of Balrok's Treasure Storage ring was completed.

Even during the drive back home with the completely sober Jong Ho, I continued to save Piercing Sword into the ring.

Even if they entered the dungeon to the point where the coating of the IDs were coming off, it should be plenty for a couple days' worth of use.

That's how the meet up with the hyungs ended, and I arrived home.

Normally I would be so tired that I would just shower and fall asleep, but I couldn't do that today.

Since I had the Eye of Insight, I could find out about the transparent marble, as well as the condition required to equip the twin blades Joker used.

Taking into consideration that mother had sensitive ears at night, I headed quietly into my room.

On top of my desk were the twin blades and marble.

It's been a week of transferring them back and forth from the table to my pocket in order to find out what they really were.

Holding the transparent marble in my hand, I began to scan it with the Eye of Insight.

-[Pae Wang](#)'s Marble-

*Can be obtained by defeating Alloss in the Unknown Dungeon.

*Recovers all health and mana upon use.

*Body becomes immortal for 1 minute upon use.

*Become twice as powerful for 1 minute upon use.

“This isn’t a joke.”

This item called Pae Wang’s Marble surprised me a lot with its ability.

I suspected that it had recovery properties, since Joker was looking for it desperately when he was nearing his death.

But to think that it was this powerful...

Recovering all of your health and mana, along with cheat-like buffs.

If Joker had consumed this, the tide of battle would have changed in a split second.

But there was one thing that bothered me, the ‘Unknown Dungeon.’

Far as I knew, the dungeons formed were based on the number of growth rings on the portal.

The number of rings indicated the level of the dungeon.

Thus the dungeons were categorized separately depending on their level.

There are exceptions where words such as manticore or succubus can be added to the dungeon name due to the special types of monsters appearing within.

There is a possibility that there is a monster with the name Unknown, but it was more likely that it literally meant of a dungeon that cannot be known.

“Is it a dungeon beyond level 34? Something you could obtain from there... It would be easily plausible with Joker’s offensive

and evasion capabilities.”

I questioned it for a bit, then let my gaze rest on the table to check the twin swords he left behind.

-Asura's Twin Blades-

*Can be obtained from the Unknown Dungeon by defeating Kawuro.

*Strength increased by 600~700. (15% of total strength increased)

*Dexterity increased by 200~300. (15% of total dexterity increased)

*(Seal) Cannot be used by anyone except the one who originally obtained it.

“He blew himself in front of me while holding a weapon like this?”

The weapon I used, Banwol Jincheon, increased my strength by 400 and 10% of my total strength on top of that.

A M/A ranked sword. It's an A ranking weapon that only monsters drop.

Only a few would have this, and weapons beyond that ranking would be extremely difficult to see.

But this Asura's Twin Blades had the 600 strength increase, and the bonus percentage stats to boot.

Sadly, this weapon that I suspected to require a special condition to be met in order to be used would not allow anyone but Joker to use it.

I finally understood why there was no change when Jong Ho, Ho Jin, and I held it.

I felt that I could trust the Eye of Insight a bit more now.

Rather than leveling up to increase my stamina stat, it would probably help more in increasing my combat capabilities by obtaining a better weapon, accessories, and armor.

My curiosity and expectation for the Unknown Dungeon increased.

“The marble and even the weapon. Seems this Unknown Dungeon sounds really enticing?”

king who rules both earth and sky with his inhuman charisma and peerless might

Chapter 75 - Ghost Is Moving

One of the three leaders of the radical faction, Ghost, came in.

Dark Lady, who was in the middle of reading through a report on the dungeon explosion, was not pleased at Ghost's visit.

Despite Ghost's lack of interest in the internal power struggle of the radical faction, he was still one of the leaders that stood on the same level as Joker and herself.

There was always a possibility that he could turn with a hidden blade.

With a bright smile on his face, Ghost spoke.

"Hey... If you saw someone arriving, you should at least greet them, Dark Lady. What about Joker? You still haven't found him?"

"....."

"Where did he go? Our leader Joker? It amused me how he charged as if to kill if I made fun of him."

"Ha... What's your business?"

"Aren't you curious? If he really did enter the Unknown Dungeon, or...although it would be impossible, but maybe he was killed by someone?"

"I asked what your business was, Ghost."

"Cold as usual. No reason. It's been awhile since we have seen each other in the meeting with Zekill, so I thought to drop by."

"So you're done with your business now?"

"Are you telling me to leave already? You're being too harsh... Oh! Is that the report on the project?"

"....."

With a playful expression, Ghost pointed the report on Dark

Lady's table.

To his action, Dark Lady frowned.

Giving a sharp glare at Ghost, Dark Lady began to gather the paperwork.

Looking at her actions, Ghost spoke.

“Pfft! Dark Lady, are you doing that because you think I’ll sneak a peek? You’re a lot cuter than you let on.”

She clenched her fists, clearly angered.

The killing intent around her seemed to become visible.

She did not enjoy Ghost’s carefree attitude.

Dark Lady spoke in an aggressive manner.

“I do not understand how... you are still able to hold onto the role of leader. I even doubted Zekill’s abilities. All thanks to you. I had doubted it when he placed a crazy clown like yourself on the seat of leadership.”

“Hm... Sometimes, I think so too. I’m not someone who’s good at climbing the ranks, so don’t hate me too much. And don’t you know I don’t have any interest in projects like that?”

“Is there anything you’re interested in?”

“Dunno. Wanna guess?”

“You aren’t interested in anything. Business, honor, and even Zekill and his subordinates. To be fair, your class and trait, and even your name is like a ghost, without a form. There’s no way I could understand.”

“Wow! What you said just now, were you that curious? If you want to know, come to Gangwon-do to play. Let’s talk over a meal. I’ll explain everything. How about it?”

“Can you cut it out with that modest act?”

“Heh heh.”

“Whew... Please get out of my sight. Unlike you, I’m not someone who is always idle.”

“Alright. Alright. I’ll leave quickly. But.....”

For a split second, Ghost’s face became serious.

Turning around, he spoke as held onto the door handle.

What he spoke, it could’ve been serious or a joke.

“Stop wasting Necklace of Searching. Joker is already dead.”

“Didn’t you understand me the first time? Stop joking around and get out!”

“Pfft. I’ll come back later to play. See you.”

“Crazy bastard....”

After leaving the room, Ghost muttered as if speaking to someone else.

His expression wasn’t really a smile or a frown, and wasn’t expressionless either.

He had a twisted expression, as if many emotions had been all crammed into one face.

His mad mutterings slowly became clearer and clearer.

“Joker... Dead.... Yangpyeong... Someone... Ha.. Pff-hahaha!”

“Hm... I’m not sure if this is the correct answer to your question, but a portal to another dimension had been opened before.”

“Are you sure it’s not the Lich King dungeon? The gate that forms next to the exit, I mean.”

Jong Ho, Ho Jin, and me.

The three of us were gathered at the office.

I had told them about the abilities behind the marble and the swords, and was asking about the Unknown Dungeon.

When I had obtained the highest ranking Lich King's armor set, I remembered that a gate had formed next to the exit: the Door to Hell.

It was the 2nd boss room, where Lich Kings of all 7 ranks appeared.

It was possible that what Ho Jin was talking about was the Door to Hell.

Noticing the reason behind my question, Ho Jin spoke.

"Are you talking about the Door to Hell? That's not it."

"Oh... Then is it really the Unknown Dungeon?"

"I can't say for sure, but would you care to listen?"

"Yes. We have to try to succeed. Please tell me."

"Let's do that then. This happened around 5 years after I joined the association, around 15 years ago."

"Min-Cheol, doesn't it feel like Jo Hin hyung-nim is reading us a bedtime story?"

"Pfft."

"Hoho... It was the 25th anniversary since the portals began forming. The association went into a state of emergency. As it was every year, a portal that gains a growth ring would explode. You are probably aware of how the monsters that appeared after level 20 were on another level. The Awakened were given only a year. The growth you could achieve in that time was laughable...."

Swallowing down his spit, Ho Jin continued to speak.

"... Just like every year, the portal exploded without fail. Thankfully though, a single portal had exploded. It was a level 25 portal, where only physical attacks would work. 300 warriors and 100 healers in the association were deployed."

"There were that many Awakened in the association back then?"

“Yes. Guilds had just started to form around that time.”

“Ah....”

“Continuing on. Out of the deployed Awakened... only a hundred returned after defeating the boss. Out of the 400, the survival rate was only 25%.”

“300 Awakened were killed....”

“At the time, the Awakened that were exiting the cleared portal couldn’t help but stop.”

“Why is that?”

“It was because two exits were formed.”

“Hm... From what you’ve said so far, it sounds like the Lich King dungeon.”

“Yes. That’s right. Just like with the Door to Hell, a gate that was shaped differently from the exit formed.”

“If that’s the case, is there anyone who went in there?”

“Yes. There was. The major at the time, Park Joon Sik, headed in.”

“Did he come back alive?”

“No. Sadly, he went missing.”

“He made a reckless choice.”

“Yes. He made all the survivors leave through the exit first. Since it was something he decided all on his own, no one knows what he really was thinking.”

“Hm.. So you’re saying that the Unknown Dungeon was the portal that opened back then?”

“Ah... Please think of it as a gate to another dimension had opened within the dungeon.”

After Ho Jin finished speaking, I sunk deep in thought.

It was to figure out the reason behind why the gate formed.

That lasted for a brief moment, as I opened my mouth while looking at Ho Jin.

“I can narrow the condition required for the portal to form into three possibilities.”

“Are we thinking the same thing?”

“Yes. Hyung too?”

“Yep. The first possibility is that the gate forms when a portal the leveled all the way from level 1 explodes. But there were a lot of portals that exploded from level 1 to 25. Since the gate only formed in the level 25 portal, it’s highly unlikely.”

“Correct. The second possibility is that there is a low rate of the gate opening in the level 25 portal.”

“That’s right. You really did study a bit before Awakening. O-gugu.”

“There’s one other possibility. The third one. The condition is that many people died....”

“Almost as if sacrifices of human life must be made in the dungeon, a certain number of lives must be lost before a portal could be formed. Is that what you’re saying?”

“The second and third possibility seems more likely.”

“Yes. I also think so too.”

“Min-Cheol. Did you say that you won’t become much stronger, even with level ups right now?”

“That’s right. The stamina and dexterity stats are important too, but you have far greater gains from artifacts.”

“Hm... How about you invest a couple of days?”

“In the level 25 the dungeon?”

“Yeah. Even with the low probability, it could open.”

“I have to start going to school again soon... Do you think I’ll have enough time?”

It was already 3 days before the school break would be over.

Even if I didn’t want to, I had to go, but I really wanted to avoid it.

It was then. Ho Jin spoke while having a smile that resembled that of Santa.

“Guess Jong Ho didn’t tell you yet.”

“Ah.. My mind’s been wandering all over the place. Totally forgot because of how excited I was for the Balrok ring, hyung-nim.”

“Huh? What is it?”

“Hohoho.. Mr. Min-Cheol. Even if the break is over, you don’t have to go to school.”

“Huh?”

“Yeah. You’ve been expelled! When school starts again, the people from the association will come to get you.”

“Did you drink again today? Are you going to say, ‘I want to put on the ring too!’ again?”

“Hey! Hey! I told you to forget about that!”

“How can I forget something like that?”

“Darn...”

“I took care of it. However, you can’t enter the dungeons right now with the ID that’s in your own name. Since you can use the ID that I gave you, there shouldn’t be any issues.”

“You aren’t the type to joke around like Jong Ho. Is it for real?”

“Yes. It’s the truth.”

“Hyung-nim didn’t work a long time at the association for

nothing. Just like he said, all you have to do is be cautious on your use of the ID and get stronger.”

“Wow... This is amazing. Thank you, Mister.”

“Hoho. No need to thank me. Thanks to you, both Jong Ho and I are getting stronger.”

He didn't go into detail about the method.

Ho Jin had somehow exempted me from a year of school I had to still finish.

It just came to me now, but it felt like waste that Ho Jin didn't leave the association earlier to come to me.

“Hm.. For now, I'll see if I can get anything else from the level 34 dungeon, and then head for the level 25 one. After seeing the weapon and marble that drops from the Unknown Dungeon, I can't help but covet it.”

“Yeah, do just that. But how long are you going to save skills into that thing? It feels like an hour has passed... Isn't it going to explode?”

“Ah.. That's right. I need to make it a habit to save on it even while I talk.”

I took Balrok's Treasure Storage that I've been unconsciously saving skills on off of my hand and handed it to Jong Ho.

Since I poured in all of my attack skills in there, it won't be long before Jong Ho and Ho Jin are able to grow at an incredible rate like I am.

It was possible that they would be faster.

Unlike me, who was leveling the skills while hunting, they would have access to maxed out skills.

Most monsters would melt before any retaliation can be made.

Ah! I totally forgot about the 2nd Awakening.

It wouldn't be a stretch to call it the greatest achievement humankind can currently think of.

The items I would need from the level 34 dungeon were the artifact obtained after defeating the hidden boss and the defective essences.

Since I wasn't able to get another one after Awakening the Eye of Insight a second time, I wasn't able to scan it to find out the real name.

No matter. I was planning to use these essences to Awaken all the A+ to S ranking attacks and shield skills.

Since I gained a huge benefit from Awakening the skill a second time, it was highly likely that Awakening the other skills would draw out their hidden potentials as well.

The Unknown Dungeon. Defective essence. Powerful artifacts.

I didn't have to go to school now, but my homework had increased.

Would it be more fitting to say that my greed increased?

"Then let's go hunting."

"Okay!"

"Let's go!"

Chapter 76 - Ghost Is Moving (2)

It's been 3 days since I've headed to the level 25 dungeon.

I had Ho Jin return me one of the Banwol Jincheons and was holding onto it tightly.

It was because Jong Ho and Ho Jin were going to use Balrok ring to hunt, so they wouldn't need the extra strength stat.

I felt that I had to get a sword to replace this soon.

This wasn't the first time I gave and then took this back. Despite owning it, I kind of felt bad.

In the taxi that goes to the dungeon for the first time of the day, I could see a few familiar low level dungeons passing by.

The entrance to the dungeon was far emptier than usual.

It's probably because a lot of schools were starting up again after the break.

Most of the Awakened were high schoolers, so dungeons below level 10 were always filled with Awakened my age.

There were a few that Awakened in their later years, but most would be forced to go to school without a choice.

Thinking about that, a feeling of superiority took over for a brief moment.

It's been three days, but this Unknown Dungeon's gate did not appear.

The Lich King dungeon and Door to Hell had opened after nearly two weeks, so it was too early to determine if this is the wrong method.

I was clearing this for the Unknown Dungeon, but the experience I was earning here couldn't satisfy me.

After all, I had tasted 2 million experience every two kills in the

level 34 dungeon.

It's reasonable that I wouldn't feel any excitement from the experience I'm earning now.

Another factor would be how much I've leveled up in a short time, and the experience required to level up increased to match that.

Out of theories for the formation of the gate I discussed with Jong Ho, I was hoping that the second theory of the Unknown Dungeon having a low chance to appear to be correct.

If the last theory of sacrificing a certain number of lives was true...

To have that many people enter the dungeon?

You could only get so far by promising to run people through the dungeon while hiding your identity.

But in the first place, how could I kill those innocent people.

On the other hand, I was stuck thinking how good it would have been if the battleground where I took out the Noblesse guild was a dungeon instead.

I had the all-purpose ID from Ho Jin and Mass Stealth Jutsu that made me invisible to all.

The association and the Awakened entering the level 25 dungeon would never know of my existence.

"Is today another swing and miss."

Originally, I had only planned on investing 3 days to find the Unknown Dungeon.

But now, I had changed my mind.

By leveling up, I could become stronger by obtaining 5 stat points every level.

But if I grew a lot more than my current self, the time it would

take to obtain those stats via level up would take longer.

On the other hand, say that I've obtained an amazing artifact.

For example, the Asura Twin Blades that Joker had.

It's a weapon that gives you 200 more strength and dexterity points than Banwol Jincheon.

It was this strong, even though it was the lowest quality that could drop.

I would be able to obtain 80 levels' worth of stats in one go.

The Unknown Dungeon was the answer for me.

It happened when I was about to head home after hunting.

A lone man was roaming about in front of the dungeon.

It wasn't just today.

For several days, it appeared as though he was searching the area from the same spot repeatedly.

It didn't seem as though he was looking for a party or was trying to hunt.

It wasn't enough for me to become wary of him, but I also couldn't just ignore his strange demeanor.

It happened while I was stealthed, passing him by.

I could hear his mumbling.

The spell Silent absorbed all the sound I made, but sounds from outside came just the same.

I couldn't see his face due to the helmet he was wearing, but I could definitely make out the words he was saying.

"He's.... here.... Little... boy....."

His pupils were shaking like a leaf.

The movement of his body was awkward, almost as if he was uncomfortable.

I thought he had a disability of some kind, and tried to pass him with some form of consideration for him.

However, the words I heard next made me hesitate.

“Joker... dead... Little... boy.... Killed... him... Kuhaha!”

“Shit!”

I swore without realizing.

The man just mentioned Joker.

Perhaps it was me overreacting because I was too conscious of Joker.

But if you put together what he said, he said that Joker died due to a little boy.

It's too much to be just a coincidence.

‘Is he from the radical faction? There shouldn't be anyone who knows my identity other than Joker...’

I decided to inspect him some more.

It was to determine if he was just insane, or he was trying to find me after finding out my identity.

I was absolutely sure that he couldn't see me.

He continued his monologue for a very long time.

All he said was what I've heard before, completely repeating himself.

Just like that, an hour had passed.

Nothing stranger occurred, so I thought I was being too sensitive and was about to leave.

Suddenly, he took in a deep breath and was violently shaking.

His eyes became focused, and his body steadied itself.

It was almost as if very talented actor had finished acting for the cameras.

Sniffling, the man spoke.

“Wow! It’s cold. I can definitely feel it... Strange?”

While saying that, his eyes met mine.

It was then!

“Pfft! Found you. Don’t stay hiding like that and come out!”

‘What? There’s nothing behind me. Was that for me? There’s no way I could be seen!’

I hurriedly check the location of where I left the Warp opened.

On top of that, I focused so that I wouldn’t miss any of his movements.

While looking at me, he continued to speak.

“Pfft! In the movies, if I say something like this, they come out. Guess I wasted my time.”

After making me worry like that, he looked around for the last time and went through the Warp.

I was sure that he was from the radical faction.

They say that a sad feeling regarding predictions are never wrong.

It looked as though he was urgently searching for me.

On top of that, the ability he carried didn’t seem to a joke.

Without any information, he was able to find out about Joker’s death and my location.

‘Damn it. I thought it finally became quiet....’

“Sir Zekill! All preparations have been made.”

“Good work, Dark Lady. I’ve heard that you’ve prepared 4 portals in total.”

“Yes, that’s correct. Two places for level 29, one level 30, and one level 31. This is how it’s been prepared.”

“Good... An hour after 20:00, blow them all up at the same time.”

“Yes!”

“Also, use association president Choi Man Seo to find the location of portals near level 40 and start operations there.”

“.....”

“Are you perhaps worried, Dark Lady?”

“N.. No, sir Zekill.”

“Our first goal is to get this nation expelled from the world wide organization for Awakened. The monsters from the explosions will be only a problem to take care of after. The damage that the association will take from trying to stop that will be a plus for us.”

“Yes. Understood. I’ll summon Choi Man Seo so that it can be prepared as soon as possible.”

“Good....”

Zekill took a sip of his tea.

He had a satisfied expression on his face, perhaps because he heard what he wanted to hear.

After that, he spoke to Ghost, who was seated next to Dark Lady.

“Ghost....”

“Yes.”

“I heard that you went to the level 25 dungeon location in Seodaemun. Is it true?”

“Hm... How did you find out? That’s right. I went.”

“What’s the reasoning. The reason for why you’ve been there for a couple days. Perhaps, it has to do with Joker....”

“Hey... Why would Joker be at the level 25 dungeon. I sensed

someone with a decent ability, so I was thinking about recruiting him.”

“The current state isn’t like usual. You probably know already. Assist with Dark Lady’s project.”

“Yes.”

Almost like a child being lectured by their teacher, Ghost replied with a sad expression.

He was a man who couldn’t be figured out.

Drinking his tea once more, Zekill spoke with a serious expression.

“Joker.... No news of Joker yet?”

“Yes....”

“Guess the Unknown Dungeon is pretty fun? I can’t get a hold of him at all.”

Dark Lady was barely restraining herself at how Ghost was addressing her boss.

Ghost was addressing the overboss Zekill, the one she followed, in a way that was no way proper.

Dark Lady sharply glared at Ghost.

Figuring out the meaning behind her glare, he made a goofy face and nodded his head.

“Ghost. Do you also not sense Joker’s location?”

“Yes. It’s so silent, it makes me wonder if he’s really dead or not. It could be that he’s hiding from us on purpose too.”

“Insolence! Damn Joker... How goes with managing the group Joker used to lead?”

“Currently, the sub leader who has a secondary class is leading in his stead.”

“If he does not show up until the next portal explosion I’ve ordered, bring him here. It won’t be long until we get into business, so we can’t have him sit at the rank of temporary boss forever.”

“Yes. Understood.”

“Will you go?”

“I look forward to the chaos that will be arriving soon.”

Finishing his words, his form was hidden from view.

Dark Lady, who was left in the house office, asked.

“The words you’ve said last time to me. Is it true?”

“What? About eating together if you come to Gangwon? Of course! When? When will you come?”

Dark Lady quietly took out one of her weapons, a short sword.

After that, she asked the same question again.

Sensing the serious mood, Ghost spoke.

“Hm... Guess I can’t get out of this willy nilly.”

“.....”

“Joker is dead.”

Perhaps a bad omen or a good one, the man that searched for me in front of the dungeon could not be seen anymore.

Like a bug that enters one’s room and then disappears, the anxiety felt was far greater than relief.

It was because I wouldn’t know when it would pop out to surprise me.

After that, I continued to run the level 25 dungeon for two days, but the gate did not open.

If I didn’t know his identity, it may have been different.

However, I could not waste any more time.

I temporarily put aside finding the Unknown Dungeon, and instead focused on my secondary plan, which was to obtain as much as benefit as I could from the level 34 dungeon.

It was for the defective essences and possible artifacts that could drop.

If there was one thing that worried me, it was that the man from before would suddenly come visit me out of nowhere again.

Just like how he appeared at the level 25 dungeon, he might do the same at the level 34 one.

If that happens, I'll have to end him.

There's no way that this could turn out well.

If I had definitive proof that he was from the radical faction when we first met, I would've ended him right then and there.

However, I only had a hunch right now.

I asked Ho Jin to find me another location with a level 34 dungeon since it could be dangerous to stay in the same spot.

Pushing aside pointless thoughts, I tried to head to the dungeon when it happened.

-crack. CRAACK!

“What the? Is this an earthquake?”

Even inside the abandoned mineshaft, the shaking was intense.

I thought of it as one of the recently common earthquakes, and continued to move once more.

-KURUHONG!

I was thinking, no, hoping that the rumbling was an earthquake.

However, it didn't take long for me realize that it wasn't one.

The sound I just heard now was Monster Fear.

Since this was a place that people didn't live in, one could guess that it was the sound of wild animals, but I was sure that this was the howling of a monster.

“Did another portal explode?”

Chapter 77 - Falling Into Confusion

I had hoped it wasn't, but it was the same situation as when the level 29 portal exploded.

My cellphone was constantly ringing.

Even without checking the contents, I knew that it would be text messages regarding evacuation and asking for reinforcements.

However, I thought I should at least check the portal's level and the location of it.

If it was occurring near my mother, I had to move.

“Ugh....”

Since my eyes had adjusted to the darkness of the abandoned mine shaft, I squinted due to the bright light of the smartphone screen.

However, that was only the beginning of my sour mood.

After confirming the information in the text, my face scrunched up further.

Current Time 20:00

Around Yangpyeong-gun Yongmun mountain level 29 portal explosion.

Around Yangpyeong-gun Sori mountain level 29, 31 portal explosion.

Around Yangpyeong-gun Jungwon mountain level 30 portal explosion.

* Any civilians living near, please evacuate to the nearest Awakened association building.

* Any Awakened nearby, please assemble to the designated location.

“Portal explosions in 4 places simultaneously? This is definitely

unnatural. The radical faction... Are they finally making their move?”

The location of the level 34 dungeon I was at was the Jungmun mountain.

Since the tremor I felt was intense, the level 29 portal that was reported was probably nearby.

I immediately turned on the map application, and entered in the coordinates sent by the association in the GPS.

As I had predicted, it wasn't far off.

Number 1 and 3. Using the Titan Boots and Blink, the distance would only take 10~20 minutes to cover.

It wouldn't take long before the Awakened from the association and from the guilds would be arriving here in droves.

They probably were using drones already to do surveillance on the movement of the monsters.

The level 34 dungeon that Ho Jin informed me of was already known by the association.

After all, Ho Jin had learned of it by looking at their files.

They probably had left it alone because humankind wasn't strong enough to conquer it, praying that it wouldn't explode.

Unluckily, this location was near the explosion.

If it was found out that the entrance to the abandoned mine shaft had been opened, things would get annoying for sure.

“Whew....”

I sunk deep in thought for a brief moment.

Even if 1 or 2 portals exploded, they wouldn't have much difficulty stopping it like before.

Despite the levels, it was in the range that humankind could stop.

However, the explosions had occurred in 4 different places at once.

On top of that, 3 of the portals needed Awakened magicians.

In a situation where they had to pool together manpower to reduce the casualties, they had to split.

“I’ll be moving quickly.”

I decided to suppress the portal explosion near me.

Was it because many casualties would occur for the association and guild?

Was it because it would be a huge threat to humankind?

No. I did feel something, but these reasons weren’t enough to move me.

I just wanted to break down the the tower the radical faction had raised with all their hard work, to show how pointless it was.

The radical faction. The project they’re so proud of.

Also I couldn’t stand any insects getting in the way of my premium dungeon I’m enjoying so much.

With condensed flame in my hand, I welded the metal entrance to the abandoned mine shaft cleanly and headed for the portal.

Hiding my form, I arrived near the portal that was in the process of exploding.

The purple light from the portal came into view.

I didn’t just rush in there, but instead used the rocks nearby as platforms to jump up into the air.

Before leaping, I picked up a stone out of the pile in my hand.

-WOOSH!

An intense sound of wind and friction against the air filled my

ears.

I was able to see a bird's eye view by jumping up into the sky and looking below.

Before arriving at the center, I used Eye of Insight to scan the portal and the surrounding area.

4 drones came into view, flying nearby the portal while recording footage.

I was also able to see a few gargoyles roaming about near the portal.

Thankfully, it didn't seem as though any Awakened had arrived yet.

-Crack!

I broke apart the stone in my hand into a few pieces, then held them in each of my hands.

As my body fell downwards, I threw the stones towards the drones.

I needed them gone before I could topple the tower they raised with all that effort.

-Woosh!

-BOOM!

Even without holding any weapons, my strength was nearly 700.

The stones I threw flew like bullets, smashing through the drones.

The wind resistance didn't impede me at all.

I just threw them towards the red dots, right on the mark.

Hit dead center, the drones fell to the ground, headless.

"Got rid of the spectators... Time to start with the few impatient ones that got out first."

I've used skills only a few times outside of dungeons and battlegrounds.

Other than the time I first Awakened or to torture Jin, there had been none.

There was no reason to use Meteor and Iceberg to grab unwanted attention.

Even if the defenders haven't arrived yet, the shock wave would alert them.

In both my hands, I condensed many A ranking Explosion and Holy Shock spells.

Taking my aim, I fired each shot into their chests.

"KURURU!"

"KWUAAH!"

Intense flames that would not extinguish burned at their chests, and each of them were howling Fear spells.

Thankfully, it didn't seem as though there were any ranged mage gargoyles.

Flapping their bat-like wings, they swarmed towards me to attack.

Noticing how the Mana Shield shook quite a lot, it seemed that their attacks were quite powerful.

The moment they perfectly gathered around me as the center...

The area around me was bathed in a red glow.

Flames falling like a leaf in autumn, the main character behind it was Fire Shock.

Without any discernible pattern, the flames were enough to bathe their bodies.

On top of that...

It wasn't enough that their bodies were burning away at the flames, holes began to form on their bodies.

It was the power of the level 200 Gravity Laser, as wide as an adult's arm.

And since I decreased the area of effect, more beams of light were able to focus on them.

“KUWWEHHH!”

“KWUACK!”

“Definitely lasted longer than the lizardmen.”

They were cleanly obliterated.

Looking around, the area was lit ablaze due to the 15m of Fire Shock.

It seemed fierce enough to burn the entire mountainside.

Using Glacial Field to douse the flames, I looked at the portal.

The portal still shook, looking normal as usual despite letting monsters out at any given moment.

Instead of waiting for them, I decided to enter.

While I wait for this portal that could explode whenever, others could arrive.

If they wouldn't come out, then I had to go in to kill them.

I heard recently from Ho Jin that they had used this method for defending against the level 25 portal explosion, so I didn't hesitate in the slightest before walking towards the portal.

“Does that make any sense?”

“It's the truth. Even leader Shingeon has confirmed it as well.”

“So you're saying that 4 recording type drones all exploded suddenly.”

“Yes. That’s right.”

“And the portal was cleanly turned into a dungeon by the time of arrival.”

“Yes.”

“You little shit! Won’t you get it together? Do you think this is a level 1 or 2 portal? It’s a level 29 portal. A level 29!”

“.....”

“But you’re saying that it was perfectly cleared before the arrival of any defensive units? 20 minutes after the drones exploded to boot?”

“If you look at the field data here....”

“Give it to me! Shingeon, you delusional bastard!”

The man received the photos of the scene from the reporter.

The reporter was one of the squad members led by Shingeon that had been deployed to the scene of the level 29 portal explosion.

The man was very upset after hearing such a bogus report, but after looking at the picture, he couldn’t help but be surprised.

“....Th-This....”

The man’s name was Lee Sang-Ho.

He was one of the 3 reinforcements sent for Yoon Jong-sun at the battle by the seaside before.

Underneath commander Yoon Jong-sun was Lee Sang-Ho, Kim Hye-won and Shingeon.

The four of them were the magician representatives of the association.

The magician battalion that Lee Sang-Ho was leading was currently taking care of the monsters nearby the level 29 portal at Sori mountain in preparation to enter.

Shingeon had already headed for the level 29 portal by Yongmun mountain, which had already become a dungeon.

Yoon Jong-sun and Kim Hye-won had headed to Jungwon mountain to stop the strongest portal of them all, the level 30 one.

Calming down, he asked the reporter.

“What are the chances that the explosion detector made an error?”

“That’s not the case. Looking at the debris in the area, we were able to recover one of the machine’s memory. We were able to confirm that gargoyles were pouring out of the portal.”

“Damn... This is crazy. You can’t confirm who it was?”

“Yes... No evidence was found nearby, and since the portal has already become a dungeon, we’d only sustain casualties by entering it now.”

It was then.

“Cool! Guy! There are many, but I will be~”

Sang-Ho’s phone began to ring.

The caller’s identity was Kim Hye-won.

Right now, she and Yoon Jong-sun should be locked in a fierce battle right now.

However, a phone call was being made from her.

‘Did she not arrive there yet?’ He thought so as he took the call.

“What, did you not arrive there yet?”

“No, we arrived.”

“Are you prepping beforehand? You need to focus on the fight.”

“That’s...”

“What is it? Tell me.”

“Did you receive the report from Shingeon?”

“Yeah. I just received it. I’m not sure what kind of crazies went all out, but they cleanly...”

“... It’s the same here.”

“What? What’s the sa-... Shit. What?”

“The level 30 portal also became a dungeon.”

“Holy shit! What’s going on!”

“For now, the commander left me here to wrap things up and is headed your way.”

“Was cleared 20 minutes after the drones exploded, the same as here? Any evidence? Any evidence at all?”

“Other than mudmen corpses lying around instead of gargoyles, the situation is the same.”

“Ha... This is ridiculous.”

Sang-Ho was blankly staring at the portal in front of him.

He couldn’t even begin to guess what group pulled off something like this.

Perhaps he should be thankful to these people.

To a certain degree, Sang-Ho felt that way.

However, this was a portal level that could be barely blocked with the deployment of an entire battalion.

If that many people had moved, at least a little bit of evidence should have remained, but...

“This was done by one person....”

Biting his lip, Sang-Ho let out a bit of monologue.

At that moment, one of the battalion members yelled.

“Leader! The nearby area has been cleared. Let’s enter!”

“Good work. I’ll take the lead.”

Chapter 78 - A Familiar Face

“We’ve received word that all four portal explosions in Yangpyeong have been suppressed. Here we have the vice head researcher of Korea’s Awakened association, Mr. Hwang Inung. Vice department head, if you will.”

“Yes. Nice to meet you. I am Hwang Inung.”

“Four portals exploded at the same time.”

“Yes.”

“But you say that the portals were suppressed faster than before? Even though there were four different places the portals exploded in.”

“Yes. We were able to stop them before any damage could be done with swift and accurate deployments, just like we prepared and practiced beforehand.”

“Yes. Thank you for all your hard work. But the continuous explosions occurring in Korea. What do you think is the reason behind them all?”

“We are still searching for the reason behind it. The global Awakened association is assisting us as well.”

“It’s been nearly one month since the first level 29 portal has exploded, but you’re telling us that the reason still hasn’t been discovered yet?”

“There are rumors going around that the portal explosions are artificial. What do you think about these accusations?”

“Yes. I have talked about that possibility through discussions. But I can say for sure that the chance of that being true is 0%.”

“Is that so. Is there any guesses as to why this is only occurring in Korea?”

“We’ll let the public know once the investigation is thoroughly

completed.”

Jong Ho, Ho Jin, and I were focusing on the TV.

We felt anger rise in us after listening to such nonsense being said over the TV.

Ho Jin, who knew Hwang Inung, spoke up.

“Look at him, turning a blind eye till the very end. He’s probably doing exactly as the association president Choi Man Seo is telling him to do. Dirty rat...”

“Out of the 4, I suppressed 2 of them. And I guess they’re going to avoid the topic of the radical faction until the very end.”

“They were always like this. They take all the credit for themselves, and if anything goes wrong, they’re too busy pushing the blame elsewhere.”

“Glad that the level 34 dungeon and I weren’t discovered at least.”

“Hey. Min-Cheol. Don’t you think that it would be better to go to the level 34 dungeon in Yangpyeong for awhile? Even though they’re giving false reports like that, the Awakened who were deployed then would know the truth of how the two level 29 portals were taken care of in less than half an hour.”

“Of course. That’s why I asked you to find any other level 34 dungeons.”

“Ho Jin hyung-nim. About the other portal location I asked about. How did it go?”

“Hoho. I found one ahead of time. But the one downside is that it’s quite far away...”

“It’s okay. I’ll be using Warp anyways.”

“Ah. Of course. It’s around Paju DMZ.”

“Wow.... It’s quite far away. Please let me know of the exact

location later.”

“Yes. Will do.”

“Where does hyung and mister hunt nowadays?”

“Where? The level 18 dungeon.”

“Yep.”

“Then should I put Healing Denial and Lower Resist in the ring as well?”

“Why? I don’t think we’ll need it? They melt with just one Meteor.”

“Ah... I guess... I did learn those two skills to clear that dungeon.”

“Ho ho. Thanks to Mr. Min-Cheol, we’re able to level up at an insane rate.”

“We’re only using our mana for defensive skills while swapping the ring between us. Since our mana recovers to full each time we level up, we’re able to continue hunting nonstop.”

“Good to hear. If you’re lucky, you can get the Louver set and Banwol Jincheon as well.”

“That’s right. I’m already level 150. Ho Jin hyung-nim is 147 or 148, I think.”

“It’s 148. I have to guard the house during weekends...”

“At the rate we’re going, it won’t be long before the three of us go out to beat up the radical faction.”

“Ho ho. That’s for another time. What happened to the man you met at the level 25 dungeon?”

“I haven’t been able to see him since.”

“Hm... There’s a high chance that the man you spoke of is Ghost.”

“I think so too. But you said that there’s no information regarding Ghost.”

“Yes. There’s no information at all, not even about his class or abilities.”

“If it comes down to it, it could be a tough fight.”

“Yes. I’ll try to find out more about it regarding that matter, so it would be wise to avoid him for now.”

“Yes. I’ll do that.”

“That was a good dinner. I’ll say my farewells to your mother and get going.”

“You’re going already?”

“Yes. Looks like I’ll have to go as well.”

[In the hunter break room located in the association headquarters...]

General Yoon Jong-sun and Lee Sang-Ho, even Shingeon who had participated in the portal explosion suppression were gathered.

The topic of the conversation was about who had stopped the level 29 portal explosion.

Lee Sang-Ho spoke first.

“Gramps. I think that a single person did this.”

“You’re saying that a single person stopped two level 29 portals? Sang-Ho...”

“Yep. There’s no evidence, and he or she left nothing that indicates any motives. If many people were involved, it would be difficult to accomplish that. Unless it’s an organization with perfect teamwork, of course.”

“Hm...”

“My intuition says that it’s a single person for sure. We’re call him A for convenience. Hye-won and Geon, go find out about this A.”

To Sang-Ho’s words, Shingeon’s brows furrowed as he spoke.

“Hey. Where are you telling us to go find out? There’s no evidence or any leads. We need at least a motive before we could move, you know? Are you telling us to grab random strangers to question?”

General Yoon Jong-sun became engrossed in deep thought.

Almost to the point where he could no longer hear the conversation between Lee Sang-Ho and Shingeon.

Then he spoke to himself.

“A single person who could have enough combat capabilities to defend against two portal explosions...”

The existence of Min-Cheol instantly came to mind.

Unlike his young looks, he was clearing a dungeon by himself with incredible strength.

But he was clearing the level 18 dungeon back then.

It was hard to believe that he was able to obtain such power in that short amount of time, enough to clear two level 29 portals so quickly.

“Hm.. There’s a limit to things....”

“What are you saying to yourself?”

“Don’t worry about it. Let’s keep up surveillance for now. If we didn’t have the help of A during this explosion crisis, it could’ve been a very difficult fight. Thus, A is currently a double-sided blade.”

“....”

“If A joins our side, it would be an incredible gain. But if A joins

the radical faction...”

“No matter what, we have to get him first. Unless it’s a serious mission or duty, everyone focus on A.”

It’s been a week since I had headed for the level 34 dungeon in Paju that Ho Jin spoke of.

The location was the only thing different, as the monsters inside were the same.

The defective essences haven’t dropped yet.

It was the same with the artifacts as well.

“Unlike my expectations, they aren’t dropping at all.”

-CRASH!

The shock wave of Meteor they were returning back to me filled the entire dungeon.

While I was obtaining the drops after taking care of all the monsters, the exit that should have appeared in the center of the dungeon did not appear.

“Did a hidden boss appear?”

No.

If a hidden boss had appeared, an incredible Howling skill should have covered the field.

Turning on Eye of Insight, I looked around the dungeon to no avail.

“Oh yes! A mimic!”

I threw down the duffel bag and moved to the center of the dungeon.

Mimics could not be detected, not even by the Eye of Insight, and would only appeared after an attack hits him.

Almost as if painting the white dungeon floor, a sea of flames were formed with Meteors.

From one spot to the furthest range of the skill, a third of the dungeon was covered in flames.

Just as I was about to change my position.

-clatter

“Bingo!”

In my sights, a red dot appeared where the mimic was.

I was sure it was the mimic.

I immediately ran towards it and cast Bind.

A stone golem’s hand broke through the ground and grabbed it tightly.

It couldn’t move anywhere.

Pulling up my sleeves, I began to punch at it.

The mimic was different from the previous mimic I caught with Jong Ho though.

There was nothing different on the outside, but despite punching twice the amount as before, it still wasn’t opening.

Since it was from a level 34 dungeon, it was a lot stronger?

Just like that, the punching continued for awhile.

-rattle rattle

-click

“Whew... It’s very tenacious.”

The chest that was shut tight finally opened.

Almost as if exploding, it began to spew out items everywhere.

In comparison with the previous one, there were a lot more items.

Since there was a lot of time left before the end of the dungeon, I decided to check the drops from here.

I didn't even look at the countless A ranking bloodstones.

The only thing I was looking at was the defective essences and the artifacts.

First, I moved the giant armor and the weapon to one corner.

Then I began to sort out the defective essences.

The Eye of Insight revealed to me that its real name was Essence of Transcendence.

Looking at the description, it allowed skills that were maxed level to transcend beyond.

I had obtained a total of three of them, as well as 3 Awakened Essences.

“Mana Shield? Meteor? Or perhaps Iceberg? Or should I choose Formless Sword Aura?”

Just by holding onto them, I was getting excited.

These skills already were displaying incredible amounts of attack power.

I couldn't even guess how powerful they would become if they transcended.

My thoughts didn't stay on that for long though.

I turned towards the sword and armor.

It didn't feel like it would be better than what I obtained after killing Joker.

It was an armor that would reduce damage taken by 40%, as well as raising 300 points of every stat.

If something that was stronger than that existed, that would be akin to cheating.

The first thing I checked was the armor.

Unfortunately, it was an embarrassing color of red.

On the chest, there was a symbol that I did not understand.

I used Eye of Insight to check the armor.

-Thirst of Blood—

Strength +0

Mana +0

Dexterity +0

Stamina +0

*Stats can be distributed by defeating monsters.

*1 stat point for every 100 monsters.

“It sounds like something good, even though it’s weak right now...”

It wasn’t good enough to swap out with the armor I had currently.

However, I thought it would be a good fit for Jong Ho or Ho Jin, since they’re focusing on hunting right now.

In dungeons where tons of monsters appeared, it would become their stats.

They both were becoming a powerful force to reckon with now.

It was only right to get them equipment befitting of their strength.

The next thing I checked was the sword.

It was very inconvenient to have Banwol Jincheon returned to me every time something went down.

Holding the sword in my hand, all I could tell that it was a simple clean sword.

On top of that, it was incredibly small compared to Banwol Jinceon.

Frankly, it looked similar to Heugdo that I obtained from the blacksmith beforehand.

Checking the ability of the sword, I couldn't help but swear.

“Holy shit! Is this possible?”

Chapter 79 - Gain and Loss

“This can’t be!”

When I held the sword in my hand, my stats were increased by a ton.

A massive increase in strength. Most weapons were all about the strength stat.

On staves, the mana stat would be attached to it.

However, this weapon here even had a special effect attached to it.

The sword had a bonus, and it was as following.

-Butcher’s Sword-

- * Strength +2200

- * 15% of overall strength increase

- * Two handed

- * Obtain 5% worth of stats from defeated foes

“... This is insane, but what’s up with the special effect...?”

The increase in strength from the Butcher’s Sword was insane.

It was as if I was holding onto 4 Banwol Jincheons.

Of course, I couldn’t gain additional stats even if I was holding onto more than two Banwol Jincheons in the first place.

The shape was small and short, and there wasn’t much weight to it.

‘To think that this is a two handed sword...’

It made me a little bit doubtful.

It was because most two handed weapons were giant, like the bastard swords or a claymore.

However, this weapon was barely the size of a traditional Yuggag-do. 1

Well, it would be wrong to determine everything by its size.

It would be probably a lot more comfortable than having to use both hands for the Banwol Jincheons.

The one thing I was doubtful was the special effect attached to it.

‘5% worth of stats from defeated foes.’

Since monsters did not have stats, this meant that the sword could only benefit from killing people.

The bonus stats could only be obtained by taking down other Awakened.

It really did its name justice.

In theory, taking down someone with 500 strength meant that I would gain 25 strength.

In retrospect, this was an amazing ability.

Tanks, magicians, assassins, warriors, healers.

The stats they invested in were all different from each other.

Magicians and healers, who mostly raised the mana stat, would have not much strength or stamina stats.

However, by absorbing the stats of warriors, whom mostly raise strength, stamina, and dexterity, I would be easily able to gain stats that would normally be difficult with leveling.

“This effect is a bit concerning.. but there are people out there that deserve having their stats stolen.”

The man who muttered to himself came to mind.

My guess was that he was probably Ghost.

Roaming around near me, he was most likely going to be an annoyance soon.

Not only him, but his subordinates as well.

All of them would become my stats, flesh and blood for my growth.

You're saying that I've become cruel after killing all of Noblesse and Joker?

That I'm treating human lives like ants?

No. Not at all.

Even a tame dog would growl at someone who tried to steal their food.

And in this case, it would be a dog vendor trying to put a collar on me.

It couldn't be helped that I would be bearing my fangs and bite with all my might.

I calmed myself from the anger I felt when I thought about them, and turned my attention to the drops.

I had finished up to checking the armor and sword.

I was sure that these were some amazing goods.

Out of all the Awakened currently, there's probably none that would wearing things like these.

Other than Awakeneds like Joker, the leaders of the radical faction.

The only thing left to check was the accessories.

The ring, necklace, and the bracelets were dropped neatly next to each other.

The accessories I was wearing consisted only of the skull ring that raised my strength by 20 and the Louver's set.

However, the effect from the Louver's set was useful in both combat and hunting.

The skull ring, on the other hand, I just couldn't toss away because I had paid it with my own money to purchase it.

Out of all the artifacts I had, you could say that this was the one with the worst stats.

First, I checked the bracelet.

Rather than a bracelet, it was more akin to a wristguard.

You could say that it was a wristguard of 10cm or so that covered my arms fully?

The Eye of Insight informed me that it was something that raised my mana stat.

"Yep. Trash. Next."

I tossed it immediately into the pile of bloodstones.

Out of all the stats it could increase, why did it have to raise the mana stat.

This wasn't the first time either.

The equipment I've obtained from my constant hunting only raised the mana stat.

It would be odd to say that a person with the insane ability of possessing infinite mana is unlucky, but when it came to equipment, I really was.

My disappointment was brief. The necklace that dropped seemed pretty good.

It was the Necklace of Searching.

If I thought of someone I knew and used the necklace, it would reveal the location of the target.

However, if the target was inside of a dungeon or a portal, it wouldn't be able to find them.

It was a one time use item, but I thought it wasn't a bad gain.

The last thing I checked was the ring.

I was hoping that it would be something to replace my skull ring.

However, just by looking at the shape, I had a feeling that it wouldn't be helpful for increasing my offensive capabilities.

If it wasn't enough that the entire armor was red, now I had this flower ring.

I wasn't sure of what flower it resembled, but it was the shape of a flower bud.

I checked the ring's stat.

-Trade with the Reaper-

- * Blooms when the wearer's life expires.

- * Obtain a new life.

- * Limited to one time use per person.

“Jackpot.”

The sword and now the ring. It was a constant homerun.

Looking at the effect, one could say that it was a ring with the ability to resurrect.

The explanation said that it gave new life to one whose life had expired.

However, it could only be used once per person.

Well, even with this, it was plenty enough.

Regarding rings and bracelets, you could equip up to two.

That meant that even if you equipped everything you could get your hands on, only the effect from the first two equipped would be active.

I put the Trade with the Reaper ring in my pocket, and equipped the skull ring once more.

The owner for this ring wouldn't be me, but my mother.

Even if she was being protected by Proof of Pledge skill, I saw firsthand of the offensive capabilities the radical faction possessed.

It wasn't as if the equipment had a requirement to wear.

On top of that, mother was receiving the same stats as I, so she could definitely wear it, and it would show its ability at the worst situation possible.

“Whenever I meet a mimic, my bag overflows.”

The armor and the sword. And the countless bloodstones that poured out.

On top of that, Essences of Transcendence and Awakened essences.

I gathered up all the loot dropped from the level 34 mimic and left the dungeon.

Dark Lady, who heard that Joker was dead from Ghost, was in a state of half belief and half doubt.

The one with the strongest offensive capability in the radical faction was Joker.

On top of that, he was a man that never lost in a 1v1.

Raising one of her eyebrows, Dark Lady asked.

“Joker was defeated?”

“I'm sure of it. The Awakened association building in Yangpyeong. They fought in that abandoned building.”

“How would you know... Whatever, who are they?”

“Pfft. Not sure who it for sure yet. But one thing. I keep seeing this childlike boy.”

“A boy? Are you talking about a single person?”

“Yep. Oddly enough, there's none I can see other than him.”

“That doesn’t make any sense. You’re saying that Joker was done in by a single boy? Is this the best of what your ability can do? If it’s an ability like that, you shouldn’t be here. It would be better if you left to start a fortune telling business. But if you keep saying nonsense like this, you’d be out of business very quickly.”

“Pfft! Dark Lady. Do you remember? Of the one that Joker had his eye on.”

“The one that took out the entire funding guild by himself?”

“Yes, yes! Joker had reported to Zekill that he cleanly eliminated him. From what I heard, he said something about infinite mana. I think he’s alive. What do you think? Isn’t this funny?”

“He, who had butchered the guild, killed Joker as well? Joker, who is the strongest in 1v1, by himself?”

“Oh! Oh! That’s correct!”

Dark Lady went into deep thought.

The inside of her head became complicated.

What made her fall into disarray was the death of Joker.

She thought that there was a tiny 1% chance of his death being true.

If he did die, she thought it would be subjugation at the hands of a very powerful group.

But Ghost was saying that he was defeated by a single person.

Joker, who had brute strength that Dark Lady couldn’t even face against.

Ghost looked at her furrowed face and spoke.

“What are you going to do?”

“.....”

“Are you going to report to Zekill? Or should we take care of it ourselves?”

“Us?”

“Of course us! There’s only two leaders left now.”

“I don’t think your fortune telling ability helps at all in combat. I’m going to report to Zekill right away. And I’ll only follow his orders.”

“You’re no fun.”

Ghost spoke while looking like a disappointed child.

Then, almost as if becoming a different person, Ghost spoke.

“I could... kill him....”

“What?”

“I could kill that kid.”

“You’re crazy. He even defeated Joker. He’s definitely stronger than what you could handle. I hope that you won’t do anything on your own, Ghost. If you died as well, it would be a huge disruption to the grand plan...”

“Hehe... I’ll kill him! I can take it!”

For a moment, he had let his sanity go.

Condensed mana began to crackle around him.

It was as if he didn’t know how to use it, but it was easy to tell just by looking how powerful the gathered mana was.

“Calm down, Ghost.”

Without realizing, Dark Lady was using her defensive skill.

After all, he was giving off that much of a killing intent.

Dark Lady was feeling fear akin to looking at a time bomb that she didn’t know when it would go off.

After the storm of mana he let out left, Ghost was calming down from his excitement, and his eyes were regaining their pupils.

She thought that the aberrant behavior was over, but then

Ghost's form began to shift madly, announcing another start to it.

From child to an ancient elder.

His form shifted from monsters to animals, demons to ghosts, filling up Dark Lady's entire field of view.

The killing intent and fear felt was enough to call it a terrifying nightmare.

How much time has passed?

The killing intent that filled the air dissipated, and Ghost regained control of himself.

"Ha.... Ha...."

"...."

"Two days. Just two days is enough."

"....."

"Until then, it's a secret! Okay?"

After saying that, Ghost went outside.

Dark Lady was still pressured from that unknown power.

With ragged breaths, she was shaking.

"M... Monster. He's not human."

She had been pushed back by Joker during the fight, but she still possessed more strength than what most Awakeneds could imagine.

But she, despite being that strong, felt this much fear.

This entire time, she was doubting Ghost's ability.

After all, the man was questionable to the point as to wonder how he obtained the position of leader.

But in that short amount of time, she saw it clearly.

Someone that she couldn't approach with her strength.

That he was an existence that didn't exist in this world.

“Whew. I let my mind wander again. If I think about him, I get excited like this.”

Ghost had returned back to his home base in Gangwon-do.

He commanded all the underlings beneath him to gather in one spot.

Ghost never cared about his underlings.

He never commanded them or even had them work on the project, not even once.

However, with his first command, everyone had gathered with confused looks of disbelief.

In the place where everyone had gathered up, Ghost opened his mouth.

“Wow. There were that many of you? Everyone, do you wanna go hunting with me?”

Chapter 80 - Ghost is Moving

“Why are you all so surprised? Let’s go hunting.”

“....”

“....”

From Ghost’s declaration, everyone began to murmur amongst themselves.

Out of nowhere, to suddenly go hunting...

Everyone was busy looking at one another for answers.

None could open their mouths to reply, however.

It’s to be expected, since the one that spoke up was Ghost, the leader of this place.

Everyone here also knew nothing of Ghost.

If they spoke hastily without thinking, they could end up forfeiting their life.

Underneath each of the radical faction leader were 8 squadrons.

Each squadron were made up of classes that maximized combat potential.

No squadron was stronger or weaker than the rest.

50 members made up each team, with a leader and a vice leader for the group.

So out of each group, the two were the best of the bunch.

Not included in these groups were 30 others.

Guardians.

These worked directly under the leaders of the radical faction.

When Joker left to fight Min-Cheol, they tried to come with, but Joker declined.

Unless their leader was meeting with the overboss Zekill, it was rare for them to leave the side of their leader.

But this wasn't the case for Ghost.

Totaling up all this, roughly 500 members were underneath each of the radical faction leaders.

You could say that the numbers weren't that great.

However, only 500 or so Awaken each year.

Out of those, 40% do not live past the first 5 years and end up disappearing.

Sometimes due to getting a class that doesn't earn money, dying to monsters, or even being killed by someone else.

Considering that, the numbers definitely weren't small.

Of course, not everyone was of Korean descent.

Since they had chosen the headquarters of the radical faction as Korea, the number of outsourced members wasn't small.

It was then.

"We only move at your command, leader."

The one who broke the silence was the vice leader Lee Ho Geun.

He worked underneath Ghost, the leader known for not carrying out his duty. He could even be called the true leader of the group, since he took over all the duties that Ghost didn't do.

He didn't possess a lot of offensive capabilities due to being a tank class, but he had great leadership.

That was probably why he was able to hold together this group that had no leader.

"Ah... Right. Ho Geun. Let's go hunting with me, you and I. Bring along everyone here too."

"Do you mean everyone?"

“Yes. How many do we have in total? One. Two. Three.”

“Exactly 481, leader.”

“There were that many of you? Whew. That’s good.”

“Then I’ll have them prepare at once.”

“Yep!”

Finishing up what he wanted to say, Ghost had the happiest look in the world on his face, whistling excitedly as he headed back into his office room.

He had been quiet all this time, but this was definitely an order from the leader to mobilize.

Receiving the order, Ho Geun worked steadily to form ranks.

“You’ve heard him. Leader has given the order to mobilize. Each squadron leader, to the front.”

Responding to his words, 8 squadron leaders came forward.

There was no hesitation found, unlike with the scene with Ghost.

Looking towards He Geun, they waited for his next command.

He continued.

“This is the first time this happened. It’s late, but this probably means that he has plans to lead us. Does everyone understand what this means?”

“Yes!”

“Yes.”

“Since this an unprecedented event, there are probably some that do not know how to handle themselves. Each squadron leader, check everyone without missing a single one. Meet your leader’s expectations!”

“Understood.”

“Yes!”

Each squadron leader quickly returned to their squadron.

Then they began to explain on what to do during an emergency deployment such as this.

Removing all evidence of themselves in the the faction's building.

Destroy Awakened IDs in front of the squadron leader.

Face and any other distinguishable features are to be hidden.

No matter what happens, save enough mana to cast at least one spell.

It was all the sake of making sure that information does not leak out.

In case they do perish during the mission, it was to make sure that their IDs as well as anything that could identify them wouldn't be left.

Number 4 was probably for the same reason.

It was to leave enough mana to suicide in case the worst case scenario occurred.

And just like that, 30 minutes after the call to mobilize had been made, all forces had finished preparing and had gathered.

However, Ghost didn't appear despite much time passing.

Just like that, an hour had passed.

Ghost appeared, with both his hands in his pockets.

Talking to himself, he scratched his head after looking at his group, geared to the teeth.

“Are you all going somewhere? Why is everyone dressed in such a scary fashion?”

“.....”

Surprised by Ghost's sudden change of attitude, Lee Ho Geun

spoke.

“Leader. You made the call to deploy just recently.”

“I did?”

Ghost murmured to himself for awhile.

It was almost as if he was asking someone else.

“Ah... That’s right!”

“All 481 members are ready.”

“Hmm... But.... Why are you readied now when we’ll be going tomorrow?”

“Th.. That’s...”

“Hm?”

“It’s nothing. Then we’ll be prepared tomorrow, at this time.”

Everyone was thinking of how ridiculous this whole nonsensical ordeal was.

Of course, no one was foolish enough to risk their life by expressing it on the outside.

Just like that, Ghost’s form disappeared, and sighs from nearly 500 members came out at once.

The worries and anxiety for tomorrow’s battle came out too.

With spring in my steps, I stepped into Warp.

3 Essences of Transcendence, Butcher’s Sword, and a ring for resurrection.

It was enough to make me wonder if there was any hunting sessions more perfect than this.

I teleported to the empty office of the midget.

Tossing the duffel bag filled with bloodstones, I put the Essences

of Transcendence on the table.

I couldn't help but smile after looking at the rainbow colored essences.

On the other hand, I began to worry over which skills to transcend.

“Looks like I'll definitely have to use one for Meteor. Perhaps Mana Shield? Can it become a cheat-like skill more than it already is? Hm...”

Firstly, since I used it the most and it did a massive amount of damage to a wide area, I decided to transcend Meteor Call.

To be short, it was my main skill.

I was hoping to increase the amount of damage dealt by the area of effect. Putting the essence on my chest, it began to glow.

Making the sound of a gentle breeze whisking by, the essence disappeared.

Meteor Call Lv. * 1 [0%]

(Summons many powerful meteors)

The skill level had changed to two stars.

I was very curious as to the power of the transcended Meteor Call was.

I wanted to cast it right away, but if I did so, everything here would be destroyed without even a trace of dust left.

“How can I wait until tomorrow for this?”

Like finding a 10 dollar bill inside the pocket of a winter coat, I couldn't hide my excitement.

Before heading in today, it seemed that I had to enter a dungeon nearby.

With this kind of feeling, it felt as though I wouldn't be able to sleep well.

Look at how the description has the word ‘many’ in it.

What a beautiful word.

No medicinal water could stop my rapidly beating heart right now.

Shaking my feet, I looked towards the other two essences still left.

When I first took down the mimic, I thought to transcend Meteor, Iceberg, and Formless Sword Aura, which were all attack skills.

However, a thought came to mind. I was very curious as to what would happen if Mana Shield if it transcended.

When I had thought that level 200 was the end, it had put an incredible bonus effect on Eye of Insight.

There was no reason as to why it couldn’t do the same for Mana Shield.

However, if all it did was to decrease the amount of mana drained or damage received, it would be a massive loss.

For someone with infinite mana like me, it would be the worst case scenario.

Even more so when the essence had an incredibly low rate of dropping.

I also didn’t know how many more essences or mimics I would come across from now on.

Holding my head, it didn’t take long for me to make my decision.

“I’ve lost count on how many times Mana Shield saved my life. Let’s go with this.”

Mana Shield Lv. * 1 [0%]

(Mana is expended to match the amount of damage you take) (If it is a skill beyond ranking, the chance to block becomes 30%. After

level 200, the chance to block increases by 2% per every 10 levels) I did it.

No. My Mana Shield did it.

I would have been happy with just not having the terrible result of having the mana cost being reduced.

Instead, I had obtained a chance to defend against skills beyond ranking.

If it reached the max level of 300, the chance would increase to 50%.

Percentage wise, it would block five of the ten attack skills beyond ranking.

Max level? No. It could be that 300 wasn't the max level.

And if I used this skill with the other shields, Mana Shield would absorb the damage first.

All the other shields were like this so far.

Since I kept this shield up all the time, the leveling should be done very quickly.

All I had to do was to go in any dungeon and lay down while having the Mana Shield on.

It wouldn't even count as work for me.

It was almost like an early Christmas present.

Multiple Meteor and transcended Mana Shield.

With this much, it wouldn't be a stretch to say that I held enough power to match all the rankers of an entire nation.

“This would drive people crazier and crazier. I think it's enough to say that I could beat a level 40 boss with an F ranking Frost Orb?”

The next skill to transcend was the Formless Sword Aura.

This was a S ranking physical attack skill, and it really shined in 1v1s.

Damage was important and all, but the scarier thing about this attack was that you could not predict it.

I had high expectations regarding how this skill would evolve.

Formless Sword Aura Lv. * 1 [0%]

(Target that has been struck by Formless Sword Aura cannot predict the next sword aura) (Uses Wild Beast. 300 second cooldown)

“Wild Beast?”

The explanation for Formless Swordless Aura was a bit poorly done.

Unless I used this Wild Beast ability myself, there was no way what the ability would do.

And on top of that, it had cooldowns stuck to it, which was my least favorite of all.

It was 5 minutes long to boot.

However, none of the three transcended skills have disappointed me so far.

I had a feeling that this Wild Beast skill was something amazing.

I grabbed the blood stones that were left spread all over, almost as if abandoned, and the brand new Butcher's Sword in my hands.

I was planning to immediately cash in the stones and head for the hunting grounds.

But if I went to a low level dungeon, the monsters would melt away before I would even be able to experience the power of the empowered skills.

I didn't have time to return back to Yangpyeong or Paju.

There was a ton of time left before Warp's cooldown finished.

Sniffing a bit and planning to eat gyoza, I headed for the level 28 dungeon.

It was a dungeon that only the top 1% could reach, but to me, it felt barely good enough to test out my skills.

I had arrived at the level 28 dungeon.

-beep

I used the master ID card from Ho Jin.

The same anxiety and excitement I had when I first entered a level 1 dungeon after becoming Awakened was taking over me.

“Shall I go now?”

Chapter 81 - Those Who Can Succeed Will Succeed, No Matter What They May Attempt

In the level 28 dungeon.

It's been a long time since I've entered this place, but since I've grinded this dungeon to the point of becoming tired of it, there wasn't any reason to be excited.

The only thing I was looking forward was the power of the transcended skill being showcased on the lizardmen.

I quickly ran to the center of the dungeon as fast as possible.

Around me, I could hear their sounds.

“KURURU!”

“KEREK!”

Following the path I took, hundreds of lizardmen showed up.

If it was for hunting, I would have ran all the way to the end of the dungeon to gather up all the monsters, so I could clear the dungeon as fast as possible.

However, I was here to test out the skill's power, so I only gathered roughly 1/3rds of the lizardmen instead.

Then I proceeded to use my main skill, Meteor.

Before the ascension, only one meteor would exist above my head.

However, now there were three meteors when I looked above.

Taking in the sights, I couldn't help but grin.

The meteor was giving off intense black flames eagerly, almost as if asking me to hurry up and choose the target it was going to destroy.

If that's the case, I should definitely grant that wish.

Massive meteors struck the exact location I aimed towards.

Not one, but three.

I didn't aim them all in one place, but instead spread it out amongst the condensed groups of lizardmen in three different places.

It didn't seem to me that only the number of meteors increased.

I could feel the change in its destructive force.

My Mana Shield had never shaken this much before when I put such a huge distance between me and the monsters like now.

No matter how many Meteors I've spammed before, the flames and the shockwave never reached me.

The blast felt like it was enough to tear the earth in half.

Its destructive force consumed every bit of flesh and blood of the lizardmen.

After seeing the ruined dungeon, I was speechless.

Such destructive force with just one cast of a skill...

“Ha.... Is this... the power behind Transcendence...?”

I wasn't concerned about the bloodstones in front of me in the slightest.

I could only keep exclaiming how insane this was.

Just like that, I stood there until the flames from Meteor Call burnt itself out.

Recovering from the shock of awe, I wanted to confirm the effect of Wild Beast on the Formless Sword Aura.

When I took a step further into the dungeon, a single lizardman popped out.

Since physical attacks didn't work, he should receive zero

damage from this.

One was enough, since I just wanted to see the effect of the skill.

-slice!

“KURAL!”

Butcher’s Sword cut directly through his body.

As expected, he didn’t take any damage, continuing to swing his halberd at me.

I didn’t stop there however, and continued to swing my sword that was covered in Formless Sword Aura until the Wild Beast skill activated.

“KURUHHH!”

“What’s that noise?”

There were no monsters that roared the Fear skill like that in this dungeon.

However, I definitely heard someone’s or something’s howl.

My inquiry didn’t last long.

As I heard the Fear skill, I could see that my body was glowing red.

On top of that, the speed at which the sword aura swung was increased to the point where it couldn’t be compared to the previous one.

That wasn’t the only thing that was surprising.

Lizardmen had 100% physical damage resistance.

As I said before, I couldn’t deal any damage to them using Formless Sword Aura.

But if that’s the case, the lizardman should still be in front of me.

Instead, where the lizardman was supposed to be, a red mist took his place.

This had occurred only in a span of seconds.

My body cooled roughly 1 min after the activation.

Wild Beast allowed me to obtain massive amounts of attack speed and power for a brief amount of time.

It seemed that Wild Beast empowered the 100% physical damage Formless Sword Aura to do magical attacks as well.

If I was able to activate Wild Beast with Formless Sword Aura during a 1v1...

They would only leave a bloody trail of mist, just like what happened to this lizardman.

After defeating all the monsters in the dungeon, I headed outside.

The transcended skills I tested were strong beyond my expectations.

No one but me could transcend their skills.

Even those lucky enough to obtain Essence of Transcendence, they would think of it as a defective item, using it like a decoration at best.

One could not raise his or her skill level to 200 when an individual's mana usage was limited.

I didn't have a method to test out the transcended Mana Shield.

After confirming the strength of these two skills, I headed home.

Following my daily routine, I stored my armor on one side of the room.

Then I proceeded to put the sword next to the drawer, and headed to the washroom to shower.

However, while I was taking a shower, I kept hearing odd noises.

Almost like the sound of sparks flying during friction between

metal.

I was able to focus on the sound because of having incredible physical abilities from my stats and being an Awakened.

I felt as though the source of the sound was from my room.

It happened the moment I ended my shower faster than normal and opened the door to my room.

“.....”

The sight in front of me was more confusing rather than amazing, since I couldn't understand it.

The Butcher's Sword that I obtained and brought home had sparks flying out of it.

Was it due to the special ability the sword had?

That probably wasn't it. The ability was to steal 5% of the butchered target.

The catch was that it only worked on humans. Awakened only, to be exact.

“How could this be hap.... Oh?”

It came to me as I looked at the dresser, wondering if it would catch on fire.

“Ah ha!”

I found out the reason why Butcher's Sword was letting out sparks.

It was due to the blades that I obtained from slaying Joker, Asura's Twin Blades.

No one could use these blades other than the one who obtained it.

So despite being a weapon with massive attack power, it was completely useless to me.

Perhaps if I used the side with the odd jagged claw as a kitchen

knife, it might be useful.

The scene in front of me, however, was that the twin blades shoved in the corner was being evaporated into energy and seeping into the Butcher's Sword.

I definitely confirmed it with my eyes, but I still couldn't understand why.

Why did this happen?

Maybe it had a hidden ability to absorb the stats of all weapons?

To confirm that, I brought out a M/F ranking sword that I got from Jong Ho earlier on.

Then I proceeded to put it next to the Butcher's Sword.

I was really hoping that it would absorb this as well.

However, there was no change to the sword.

While that was happening, the twin swords were completely absorbed, and now jagged teeth similar to that of a shark appeared on the backbone of the sword.

This was just a speculation, but the weapon it absorbed was from the Unknown Dungeon.

Perhaps weapons that lost their owners would be absorbed by other powerful weapons in order to find new masters.

I immediately used Eye of Insight on the sword.

I was extremely curious as to how much stat it had gained.

-Butcher's Sword-

*Strength +2200+350

*Dexterity +150

*15% increased strength

*Two handed sword

*Absorbs 5% worth of stats from fallen foes

“Is it a trend for high level weapons to steal stats?”

It wasn't a stretch to wonder so.

It had more than half the stats that Asura's Twin Blades had added onto itself.

The addition effect of % increase for strength and dexterity wasn't added, but to obtain 500 points of stats wasn't anything less than a steal.

That amount of gain in stats could only be obtained via 100 level ups.

I had shoved it in the corner of the room because it was difficult to get rid of it, but to think that it would become such a boon to me.

Moments like this only confirmed the old saying that 'those who can succeed will succeed, no matter what they may attempt.'

“How can I sleep peacefully if things turn out like this!”

The next day.

Lee Ho Geun had the entire force assemble in the lobby once more.

Today was the day.

This was the first time Ghost had made the call for emergency deployment.

They were worried that a nonsensical situation like yesterday would occur again.

However, almost as if to make fun that worry, it didn't take long for Ghost to appear.

On top of that, he was completely different from his usual looks.

A staff and a short sword was in each hand.

Armor that glowed golden covered his body.

Until now, no one had seen him equip for battle before.

Ghost had always worn stretched out T-shirts or baggy clothes in general.

His armor was always in his office.

That wasn't all there was to it though.

His expression and even the way he walked was that of a different person.

Ghost stopped walking, and spoke with a serious expression.

“Is everyone gathered?”

To his question, vice leader Lee Ho Geun gave his report.

“Yes! All 481. We have finished gathering everyone.”

“Good.”

He looked towards the 8 different squadrons of radical faction members.

Due to his fierce expression, none could even swallow their spit, continuing to stand at attention.

The brief silence was broken by him continuing on.

“We are taking this path to Paju.”

“Yes! Leader!”

“Yes! Leader!”

The lobby was filled with the sound of hundreds of radical faction members sounding off.

The scene was similar to that of soldiers receiving their orders for deployment.

When the ringing of sound had stopped, he spoke.

“The opponent is a single person. But you cannot underestimate

him due to that. I hope you can understand that well, seeing how I'm mobilizing everyone, nearing 500 members."

"...."

"Please give us your orders, leader!"

"Current time is 13:00. 2nd meetup location is Paju. Assemble at 20:00. Do not use Warp. During the next 7 hours, each squad is to arrive there without drawing attention. We stake out the 2nd location from 1km away. Dismissed."

Giving a short, simple, and clear order, Ghost left the building.

Each squadron leader also moved out in sync.

Just like that, a mission that was their first and what could be their last began.

It's been a while since I visited the level 34 dungeon located in Paju with Jong Ho and Ho Jin.

It was to show them the transcended skills and to put them in the Balrok ring.

They said that they were already going through the level 23 hunting grounds to defeat ghouls.

Only 3 weeks ago, these guys were hunting at the level 13 dungeon in a 6 man group.

It was almost enough to wonder if this is what people meant when they mentioned about turning around their life.

I hunted for two hours with them after they had visited me at 6pm.

I didn't mind at all, but I had to drag these two along, who kept saying that they felt bad and wanted to go home.

In between the runs, I kept charging up the ring.

"Hyung-nims. The rings are done charging. You can use without

worry.”

“Hm... It would be great if shields could be put in there too. What a shame.”

“I know right. I don’t know why only attack skills can be put in.”

Even while the two complained about the ring, they had smiles on their faces.

“Ah! From now on, you must use defensive skills when you use Meteor.”

“Oh, I got it. When we saw it before, we could tell it wasn’t something to joke about.”

“Thank you for doing this every time for us, Mr. Min-Cheol.”

“No need to thank me. You two should get going. I’ll see you two out up to here.”

It happened when I was trying to escort them out from the dungeon entrance.

-shrrrkk

“C... Crazy. What is this!”

“KUHAAA!”

Chapter 82 - Thank You for the Meal

“Kuhahaha!”

The owner of the laughter was Ghost.

I knew that he had the ability to locate my whereabouts, to think that it was this accurate.

He was waiting for me, not far from the entrance of the dungeon.

In a split second, a large group of people in black masks and covers formed up behind him.

There seemed to be a lot gathered.

At least 400 were present.

My guess was that he mobilized his lackeys with him.

My guard was down because I had just left the dungeon and was speaking with Jong Ho and Ho Jin.

However, to think that I wasn't able to sense this many people moving in...

Even if I didn't use Eye of Insight, I could still pick up the faintest of noise due to being an Awakened.

It appeared that those gathered here had quite the physical capability.

Jong Ho and Ho Jin were tense due to their appearance.

After a moment of hesitation, Ho Jin asked.

“.....”

“Is it him? The man that roamed in front of the level 25 dungeon before?”

“Yes, that's correct.”

“Who is this, hyung-nim? Is it perhaps the person named Ghost? Ghast? Or something like that?”

“I have a feeling that it is...”

This situation didn't look good.

I decided that it was wiser to avoid rather than fighting them.

If I used Mass Stealth Jutsu that none can detect...

Attack or receiving damage undoes the stealth.

I would be safe due to my Mana Shield, but it wouldn't take long for Jong Ho and Ho Jin to be discovered.

They would be invisible, but with everyone firing off their skills, they were bound to be hit.

Casting Silent to block off sound, I turned towards the two of them to talk.

“Hyung-nim. Mister. Are you able to use Warp?”

“Yep.”

“Yes. I am able to use it as well.”

“Then escape first.”

“What? What about you? What are you going to do?”

“.....”

“I have a lot of time left before my Warp cooldown finishes.”

“Then you're saying that you're going to die here?”

“I can escape by using stealth. The two of you should leave first.”

“It's true that the combat capabilities we two can provide isn't of any use in this fight. However...”

“Yeah! If we wanna survive, we gotta survive together.”

“Why are you two being like this? Who said I was going to die? I can buy enough time for you two to use Warp, so go escape first.”

It was then.

“Kuhaha!”

Ghost was laughing once more.

It could only mean that he was listening to our conversation.

I didn't stare at him with disbelief for long.

Ghost spoke.

"Isn't it quite the wonderful friendship? Warp... Stealth isn't bad either. But I think you'll have to bring down your voice a notch."

Did he find out by reading our lips?

No. I turned around when I spoke, so it was impossible.

I was sure that he heard our conversation.

Dispelling Silent, I talked to him.

"Didn't know you had a hobby of eavesdropping on conversations."

"Pfft. What a funny combination."

"What?"

"To think that I'd meet an old friend at a place like this."

"What are you saying?"

"Kim Ho Jin."

What? The name Ho Jin has never come up in our conversations until now.

But he wasn't just mentioning the name Ho Jin. He was calling him a friend.

The golden helmet made it impossible to see Ghost's face.

At his words, the flabbergasted Ho Jin asked.

"Who are you!"

Instead of answering, Ghost raised his hand and took off his helmet.

"Huh? Y.. You are!"

Ho Jin was frightened, enough to step back in fear.

It was almost like he saw a dead person coming back to life.

To his reaction, Jong Ho asked urgently.

“Hyung-nim, who is it? Who could it be that you’re that surprised?”

“Park... Park Joon Sik...”

“Huh? Who is that?”

It was definitely a name that I heard of before.

Words flowed out naturally from my mouth.

“Park Joon Sik? The commander who went into the level 25 Unknown Dungeon?”

“Yes... That’s correct.”

“Whew. Look at this. We couldn’t tell if you were alive or not, but you were here playing commander?”

Park Joon Sik.

Fifteen years ago, when the level 25 portal exploded, he was the commander of the association hunters that was deployed to defend against the explosion.

Just as Ho Jin said before, he was the one who entered the new portal instead going through the exit after all the monsters were defeated.

Fifteen years later, the man who couldn’t even be confirmed dead or alive was appearing before us with his head held high as one of the leaders of the radical faction.

“It’s funny how fate works. To think that you’d be involved in this situation with the kiddo.”

“H... How... How are you here?”

“Ah. I died that day. No. I thought I was dead.”

“....”

“The moment I declined the exit and entered that place, I was already a dead man walking.”

Ghost started to speak of what happened that day.

The exit opened up after all the monsters died.

A door to another dimension had appeared, but none had any interest towards it.

The fight took many hours and hundreds of their comrades perished.

No one had the strength or desire to press forward.

After he, the commander, had everyone evacuate, it happened.

His body moved towards the other portal without his will.

On top of that, he heard someone's voice.

No matter how much he struggled and yelled, he couldn't resist this strange pull.

Almost as if he was a doll on a string, he was dragged in.

Ghost had faced off with monsters that he could never hope to beat with his strength.

But despite his body being ripped parted and shredded, the flame of his life refused to be extinguished.

When he regained consciousness, all his wounds were treated and his mana had recovered fully.

However, the pain equivalent to the injury he sustained was still there.

Every day, the pain built up and stayed until the day he escaped the dungeon.

It was a place where he couldn't even decide his own death.

His mind was being consumed by the pain he couldn't even

describe.

He didn't feel hunger or thirst.

He was alive in that place for 5 years, yet there was no difference from being dead.

Ghost finished speaking and gave a pained smirk.

"Guess I babbled on too long. Ho Jin. Has the world changed?"

"Don't you feel any shame! You were the commander! Now you're a leader of the radical faction."

"Ahaha! That's all in the past. I'll give my strength to him so that can change the world. To do that, we need that kid's ability."

"...."

Without a single word, I was listening in on the conversation between Ho Jin and Ghost.

Looking at me, Ghost spoke.

"Warp, Mass Stealth Jutsu. Now, just try escaping here."

"....."

"But before you do, do you have time to look at a funny photo?"

"What are you...."

Ghost tossed a smartphone towards me.

Catching that, I stared at him.

Ghost had a villainous look as he raised his chin, giving a gesture for me to check the phone.

Turning my view from Ghost, I looked towards the home screen on the smartphone.

Looking at that, killing intent surrounded me as I poured out swears.

"You.. piece of shit!"

“Kyahaha! I didn’t expect this much of a reaction. Kyahaha!”

The picture that I confirmed was of my house.

The house that my mother would be at.

He had sent someone there.

I wasn’t sure how much of a combat capability the person he sent had.

However, my Proof of Oath was protecting her, so most attacks wouldn’t work in the slightest.

It was as if my defensive ability was copied onto her.

On top of that, she was wearing the ring of revival.

Calming down, I stared at him as I spoke.

“Don’t even lay a finger on her.”

“Oho. How scary.”

“It’s too late to regret. How dare scums such as yourselves dare....”

“Mass Stealth Jutsu? Not using it?”

“The thing you want is my power, right? You’re telling me to join you?”

“Ding. You got one part wrong.”

“....”

“We do need your power. But do you know... we don’t need you on our side to get it?”

“What?”

It was then.

One of the people standing behind him hurriedly came forward.

He then put the phone on Ghost’s ear.

With a smirk, Ghost answered the call.

“Ho Geun. Listen well. This is a command I’m giving you as the leader.”

“Yes!”

“One hour. Exactly one hour from now, if I do not call you, commit suicide.”

“.... Yes. Understood.”

The person holding the phone to his ear backed off, and Ghost continued to speak.

“I dislike fights where people hold back. You heard what I said, right? If you kill everyone and survive... Your mother will be safe.”

“You crazy piece of shit.”

“Kuha! Glad you have the urge to fight now.”

I quietly turned my body towards the level 34 dungeon.

Since I had cleared it first, the dungeon wasn’t different from a hunting ground.

No IDs were needed, as I just needed to move my feet to enter.

“You’re not gonna fight here, right?”

As if Ghost and his subordinates understood, they hastily moved towards the dungeon.

My eyes met with Jong Ho and Ho Jin.

Trying not to put on an awkward smile, I spoke.

“Don’t touch them. If I lose, their lives will be taken anyways.”

“Of course. Doesn’t matter to me. Let us hurry to the dungeon.”

After entering the dungeon, hundreds of his subordinates followed Ghost’s orders to take down the monsters.

These monsters were from the level 34 dungeon.

However, these subordinates executed perfect attack and defensive capabilities.

Quickly understanding that they reflected attacks, all the monsters were taken down in a flash.

“4 minutes and 55 seconds. It’s been exactly 5 minutes since I ended the call. There’s still a lot of time.”

“It looked like your subordinates had a lot of potential. I feel sorry for them, suffering so much from having a leader like you.”

“Kyaha! Show me! I’ll witness your strength!”

Ghost immediately moved far back.

Then he raised his hand, pointing straight at me.

As soon as the motion was made, the 8 squadrons of the radical faction spread out and gathered in formation.

Jong Ho and Ho Jin are probably guarding the dungeon from the outside.

I told them to return home using Warp, but they’re not the type of people to listen to me.

Since I had no information regarding Ghost, this was a huge risk for me.

However, this might be a favorable situation for me.

If everyone had come at me at once, it would have been a difficult battle.

But If I took care of his underlings first?

All the stats they have...

The stats of hundreds of powerful Awakened would be prey to fill up the belly of the beast, my Butcher’s Sword.

Keeping me at the center, they had completely surrounded me.

In the front were tankers. The backline had magician classes.

On top of that, assassins and warrior classes left the formation, looking for a blind spot.

In a blink of an eye, they came in close.

“ORAAAAA!”

All of them were busy stabbing away at me with their weapons.

Such weak pathetic attacks.

Giving a halfhearted laughter, I calmly spoke.

“Haha. Thank you for the meal.”

Chapter 83 - Thank You for the Meal (2)

The attacks of the assassins that aimed to get the first strike were blocked by my Mana Shield.

Since they were high levels with great skill, the shield shook a lot.

However, the shield would not be broken unless a skill beyond rank was used.

Even if they did, my other shields would block it, and the Mana Shield itself had a 30% chance to block it as well.

“Oraaaa!”

They were divided into 8 squads.

One of them who hid their form reappeared with a yell.

Casting enchant to power up his assassination weapon, he threw it at me.

It was an attack from one of the leaders of the squadrons.

On top of that, those around him were pouring all their buff skills onto him.

“Focus on buffing our squad leader!”

“Here. Take this!”

The throwing weapon left his hand, flying with deadly intent.

The attack was buffed by several classes, raising the damage and attack speed.

The speed and power was confirmed by the shockwave it gave off as it flew.

-SLICE

The attack flew true towards me.

However, such a pathetic attack only became fodder for my Mana

Shield.

Despite the attack being a failure, the owner of the weapon continued to mix in Teleport and stealth skills to launch rapid attacks in succession.

However, against someone like me with an ultimate ability, he easily lost his life.

“KUWUHUCK!”

I wouldn't allow any more attacks.

Measuring up his power and sensibility, he appeared to be quite weaker than Jin.

I guess it was unfair of me to compare him to someone who worked directly underneath Joker.

I grabbed him by his neck.

Looking directly into his eyes, I spoke.

“The tom foolery stops here.”

“KUH...KUHHUCK!”

His neck was twisted due to the incredible amount of force I held him with, and his face was a mess with all the tears and snot that covered it.

Flailing about, it seemed that he couldn't breathe properly.

Struggling with his entire body, he suddenly looked up.

Almost as if seeing something that he shouldn't have, his eyes that were bloodshot due to the vessels popping only grew bigger.

Only then did he stop resisting, almost as if giving up on everything.

His breathing didn't stop, but he had accepted the tragedy that was about to unfold.

That was right.

The upper portion of the dungeon was filled by 6 flaming meteors.

They were witnessing meteors covered in dark flames, something they've never seen or heard of before.

The amount, light, and size was enough to make them cower in fear.

Upon seeing this spectacle, the other squadron leaders began to shout urgently.

“De-Defensive formation!”

“Block it! Block!”

Following their orders, each member began to cast their skills.

Out of the bunch, the skill that caught my eye was from a shaman class, who used the skill call Cube.

It spawned room big enough to fit everyone in his squad, causing his squadron to be hidden from sight.

“Hide and seek, huh.... Then a crazy ‘it’ will find you.”

It was amusing to see the spectacle before me through the Eye of Insight.

They had gathered into a small room, each casting their own defensive skills.

The location was hidden, far away from where the other radical faction members were.

A 50 member squadron had used all their defensive skill, so they must've thought the Cube was a safe haven.

But those thoughts would change very soon.

“I wonder if that could block a transcended Meteor?”

I spread the grouped 6 meteors apart.

Each one landed exactly where I wanted them to.

-CRASH!

-BOOM!

“Ku... Kuuck!”

Its power was something else.

The Cube that was far away ceased to exist without a trace.

Not even their corpses could be found.

I only had used a third of the meteors, but to think that it would do this much.

In the previous fight with Noblesse, I had used a level 40 Meteor Call.

However, they gathered in a defensive formation and successfully blocked it.

I guess the difference now is that in the past, the skill required casting time and had a cooldown, so continuous follow up attacks couldn't be done.

However, the transcended Meteor's destructive force couldn't even be compared to its predecessor.

Forget about preparing to defend, they couldn't even utter a squeak.

It wasn't just the Cube area that suffered like so.

“KUHAACK!”

“kUU... KUAAA!”

Once near 400 strong, now only about 50 remained at the most.

Even those that survived were coughing up blood, holding onto their bodies with what few limbs they had left.

The man that I held in my grip had long since perished, hanging limply.

The temperature of the dungeon was enough to cook the flesh of

the average civilian.

The scent of blood only grew thicker with the heat.

I was locating their position for a follow up attack.

The expression that Ghost had on, however, was not pleasant for me.

Roughly 60 were still guarding him.

In between them, I could see Ghost smiling.

He had lost hundreds of his followers in less than a minute.

Perhaps even excited at this scene, his body began to shake.

“Disgusting pervert.”

I couldn't help but comment.

I quickly decimated those that were left in one swoop.

After all, I didn't have any time to waste on them.

While I was catching my breath, Butcher's Sword began to slightly vibrate.

‘Stats!’

They had vanished without a trace.

All of them should be at least level 300 Awakeneds.

No. They were probably far higher in terms of levels.

I was able to steal 5% worth of stats from all of them.

The amount should be tremendous.

A level 300 Awakened roughly had 1500 points of stats.

5% of that would be 75.

I would be gaining stats worth 15 level ups.

On top of that, I had taken out 400 or so.

‘75 times 400 would be.... 3... 30,000?’

I was already achieving cheat like growth from my limitless mana.

But the amount of stats this crazy sword absorbed could be considered even more cheat like.

However, out of the stats I gained, some belonged in the mana stats, and those were useless to me.

Strength: 100

Mana: 100

Dexterity: 50

Stamina: 50

If we take into account that some had the stats such as this, the stats I would be able to gain per sacrifice would be something like this.

Strength: 5

Mana: 5

Dexterity: 2.5

Stamina: 2.5

I would be like so.

I wasn't sure how many points I would receive if I took out the mana stats from the healers and magician classes, but it would still be a crazy amount of growth.

Excited, I was about to check the stats on my sword.

“Beautiful. Your ability is incredible!”

Ghost put on a playful childish look as he trotted towards me, clapping his hands together.

Those that guarded him followed behind him.

It wouldn't be long before they'd lose their lives to the black flames.

Were they coming to attack me without giving me any time?

I checked the cooldown of my shields quickly.

The grip on my sword tightened a little further.

Ghost spoke.

“Level 200 Meteor? You’re able to create 3 per cast? Wow. Your ability is... really tasty looking...”

“You’re crazy.”

“To annihilate 400 opponents instantly.”

“They were your subordinates. I heard that you went through something similar 15 years ago.”

“Kyaha! That’s right. Was it like that? But.. that’s because they were weak? Because. They. Were. Weak.”

“.....”

“If I think about it now, it’s embarrassing how I was with them, even for a moment.”

“I don’t want to hear it. Are you going to fight together? Or should I start sending off your subordinates first?”

“Hm... But I want to see more though? That tasty looking ability, I mean.”

“As you wish.”

He looked towards his guardians behind him and spoke.

“You lot can’t die in one hit! Alright?”

“...Yes, leader!”

“We’ll take care of it.”

“Kuhuhu. That’s right! Give me the best show... Now. Go, quickly!”

“Yes!”

They quickly charged in.

Each keeping a certain distance from me, they had surrounded me.

‘Not planning to die in one hit by not grouping up?’

That wasn’t a problem for me at all.

Cooldown? Cast time? That didn’t exist for me.

It was just that I’d have to fire in several directions.

If it came down to skill control, I was confident due to casting more than anyone else.

Flaming meteors flew down from above.

Not towards those surrounding me, but towards Ghost.

However.

“Hm? This is against the rules.”

‘What! This is impossible.’

The Meteor Call that I cast towards him had disappeared without a trace.

The speed of my attack doesn’t even give time for defensive measures.

However, that staff held in his hand had sucked in all the meteors.

Not only did his class and ability stay hidden, but a weapon that absorbs even Meteor.

I didn’t expect it to be an easy fight, but now I was thinking that it was going to be difficult.

“How dare you! Protect our leader!”

“No, no. Don’t worry about me and continue to fight. I’m really looking forward to this.”

“Yes?... Yes!”

-SLICE! STAB! SWISH!

The confusion that Ghost caused only lasted a moment.

They began to pour their attacks at me.

A man with a spear and axe came towards me.

Spinning his body rapidly, he neared me.

“Whirlwind?”

No.

My shield was being slice apart.

It was definitely a skill beyond ranking.

Mana Shield wasn't able to activate, but instead Reflect Shield was being cut down while retaliating.

The skill effect looked just like Whirlwind.

‘Guess they’re not his personal guards for nothing.’

I wasn't able to let my guard down even for a moment.

When I was about to cleave his head off with my sword, a Phoenix flew towards me with great speed from above.

It was a ranged skill used by the ranger class, allowing hits on not just ground targets, but aerial targets as well.

It was an A ranking attack skill, so all it amounted towards me was a red crow.

However, I wasn't sure what ability it may have.

It didn't make sense, but it's important to be always prepared.

Since my offensive capability was thousands of times greater than theirs, there was no need to overdo it.

‘An attack that is more defense oriented.’

-CRACK!

The fire bird that flew towards its mark was obliterated.

When they all tried to attack at the same time, I used Glacial Field to spawn a frozen area on the ground.

While their movements slowed, I cast Meteor Call.

-CRASH!

Instantly approaching them, I landed Formless Sword Aura directly on them.

Without being able to do anything at all, they perished.

“KU... KUUH! Leader!”

“Tsk.”

Looking at them, Ghost complained.

“Hey! I told you not to die in one hit. I wanted to see his physical attack skills too.....”

“I’ll show it to you personally. Oraaa!”

Chapter 84 - Ghost's Ability

“Woah, woah. Don’t get so worked up now.”

I dashed towards Ghost.

My body felt very different from before.

It was to be expected, as I had stolen stats from hundreds of radical faction members.

It couldn’t be compared to the 5 points one would get from a level up.

The change was enough for me to confirm without a doubt.

The distance between us was only 10m.

Ghost stood there, relaxing about with a nonchalant smile on his face.

It was then.

Raising his hand 90 degrees from his side, he pointed behind me.

And then he spoke.

“That.”

“.....”

“What will you do?”

Ghost asked as he pointed behind me.

Naturally, I looked towards where he pointed.

I was aware that it could be a trick, so I casted the most powerful defensive skills of a paladin class, Iron Skin and Holy Block.

Turning around, I saw something important that I had forgotten about.

“That..... That is...”

“Kuku. Do you know about it? What that is?”

“.....”

There stood the portal leading to the Unknown Dungeon.

It really took a certain numbers of sacrifices to form.

The portal in the level 25 dungeon did not form no matter how many times I ran through it.

Since all the monsters in the dungeon were taken out, the exit portal had also appeared.

Noticing that I had lost my focus to the portal, Ghost laughed as he spoke.

“Oh... It looks like you know. Did Joker tell you about it before he died?”

“.....”

“Is that not so? Do you know why I brought all my subordinates in here?”

“It couldn’t be....”

“Kuku. That’s right.”

His bright smile instantly crumpled.

“I was in there for 5 years. Would it be more accurate to say I was trapped in there? The living hell I went through... Even now, if I think about it, my entire body shudders.”

“The reason why you brought them all here... It was for everyone to die so that you can head in there?”

“Correct. After I feast on your ability, it won’t be 5 years. I could take down that place in a single day and leave.”

“Feasting on my ability? You’ve been saying things like how tasty my ability looks or about feasting on it. What really is your identity?”

“Are you curious? Hehe. You’ll soon know.”

“Ah. That’s that. Do you know why you were stuck in there for 5 years?”

“Hm... That’s because I didn’t prepare at al-”

“Wrong. That’s because you were weak. It’s the same even now!”

Since I was already near him, it was only a matter of time before I got to Ghost.

However, Meteor wouldn’t work against him.

The staff that he held easily consumed the transcended Meteor almost as if mocking me.

I also didn’t have any information regarding the weapon he was holding onto.

It was possible that he could only block attacks that were fire type based.

Another possibility was that he would consume the attack and send it back to me.

Well, it shouldn’t be a problem since I do not have any attack skills that were beyond ranking.

Swinging my Butcher’s Sword, I casted Iceberg at the same time.

I was hoping that his staff could only block fire type attacks.

“Shit.....”

I couldn’t help but swear.

It wasn’t because my attack failed.

Contrary to my expectations, the sword that I swung that was enchanted with the Formless Sword Aura hit directly on his wrist.

I was planning to cut off his right arm that was holding onto the staff and pour down Meteor like crazy.

Was it the power of all the stats that Butcher’s Sword absorbed?

From the hand that was cut off, blood poured out like fountains.

‘How much did my strength stat increase by....’

“Ah..... AHHHH! How could you!”

Grabbing on to the wrist that had been cut, it was as if he was throwing a complaining fit.

On top for that, he quickly put on the helm that he took off before.

Acting like this despite receiving an attack that would greatly affect the battle, I was sure that he wasn’t sane at all.

Now he shouldn’t be able to predict the next Formless Sword Aura.

I wasn’t sure how many points had been added, but an incredible amount of strength stat was added.

If I was able to also proc Wild Beast as well, he would perish without as so much as a squeak.

As he backed off, I moved closer while speaking.

“You sure are energetic, even until death.”

“Ow, ow! It hurts!”

“Joker must have been something else. After meeting him, you don’t feel like much of a challenge.”

“Kuku. It’s all messed up. Guess I’ll use it a bit more before I throw it away.”

“What?”

“KUYAAAAAA!”

Making a strange noise, he charged towards me.

The short sword in his left hand changed to a giant sword in an instant.

In an instant, he appeared behind me.

Almost as if hesitating for a moment, he stretched out his arm

and swung the sword.

It must be the True One Strike.

It was a single powerful enchanted attack that was beyond ranking.

If there was one difference, it was that One Strike only had a 3m range, but True One Strike had nearly 10 times the range and damage of the attack.

“If that was your final attack, you chose the wrong opponent!”

-CLANG!

-SLICE!

-thud

The greatsword was equivalent in size with a male body.

But the Butcher's Sword easily blocked it.

Instead of just relying on skills, it was time to show off my physical strength that had been greatly increased from before.

Nearly a hundred Sword Auras went towards him.

The aura stopped before Wild Beast could even proc.

His entire body was torn apart as he collapsed, already dead.

As I said before, Joker must've been quite powerful.

Ghost was also a leader of the radical faction, but to be so easily defeated like this.

His golden armor was already torn apart to the point where it was beyond recognition.

“Guess it wasn't that good of an armor.”

I immediately looked towards the staff instead.

It definitely had an incredible ability.

As I was trying to pick up the staff...

“Hup!”

It was heavy enough to make me let a short grunt.

No matter how much strength I put into it, I wasn't able to lift it up.

This didn't make any sense.

My strength wasn't enough?

No way.

Perhaps it needed mana, since it was a staff after all.

But that made even less sense.

I had infinite mana.

If it's a weapon that requires a certain amount of mana to use, there wouldn't be any weapons in the world that I couldn't lift.

I tried to check it with the Eye of Insight, but I couldn't.

Nothing like this happened before.

Then I heard a noise that was enough to get my ears ringing.

“Until the owner dies, no one can obtain it.”

“Huh!”

-CRASH!

Out of reflex, I slammed Meteor down.

Ghost was definitely standing there.

However, his corpse was definitely behind me.

In the same clothes he wore before, he was standing right next to me.

According to him, weapons that were bound to an Awakened could not be checked, even with the Eye of Insight.

Looking at my shocked face, Ghost spoke.

“It's kind of sad to think that it would end that quickly. Now we

really start.”

“H...How.”

“The one you killed just now? Hm. He’s the one with the greatest presence, even if his skills are worthless.”

“Presence?”

“Many presences exist in Ghost’s body. We all coexist in that single place. However, it would be probably difficult to see the others, because you’re going to die by my hands.”

His speech and the mood had changed from before.

Thinking about what the previous one said regarding these forms and abilities, it seemed that Ghost was able to absorb the ability and personalities of others.

Then the answer was clear.

I’ll repeatedly kill him until there were no more presences left in his body.

“Tens or hundreds, I’ll kill them all. I hope that all the pain you feel will be sent to all the others as well....”

“KUWAAA!”

With a single movement from his hand, an intense Howling was heard.

It was a summoned being.

Checking with my Eye of Insight, I found out it was a S+ ranking King Suwoo.

“You have quite the powerful summoned being. But I also have my own as well.”

“KUWUHHHHH!”

With a cast, three giant Avatars spawned.

Electric type, fire type, and frost type were summoned.

Even if the skill was an S+ ranking skill, there were three level 200 Avatars.

Their combat prowess could not reach mine.

My side definitely has the advantage.

“Go. Butcher them.”

“KUWUHHHHHHH!”

Summoned beings that were known for their huge size fought amongst each other.

Their blood and Fear filled the air.

I only looked at them for a brief moment, as I turned my attention towards Ghost.

If he was a summoner, without a summoned being, he wouldn't be that strong.

Your overconfident attitude, I will see to it that it crumbles before my eyes.

“I'll cut you apart as well!”

“Hyung-nim. Do you think something happened?”

“Hey! Don't say that, even as a joke.”

“Ha.... I think I'm going to go crazy with worry.”

Jong Ho and Ho Jin were waiting outside the level 34 dungeon, sick with worry.

Min-Cheol told them to go home, but how could they.

Ghost and his subordinates had hidden themselves in the dungeon.

Just like that, 20 minutes had passed as they stamped their feet with anxiety, unable to enter the dungeon as they stood near it and only being able to wait.

Even if they entered the dungeon now, they would enter a different instance.

The picture in the smartphone that Min-Cheol looked at before entering definitely had his house in it.

It was definitely a dirty trick to make sure that a fight couldn't be avoided.

However, Min-Cheol said to not enter even until the very end.

It was because he thought that the two of them wouldn't be able to handle it.

Min-Cheol believed that if his opponent was strong enough to operate on his own, he was definitely at least the right arm of the Overboss.

Since they couldn't ignore Min-Cheol's words that were full of confidence, the two of them were standing guard here.

Jong Ho hated himself for not being able to do anything in this situation.

First Noblesse, then Joker, and now Ghost.

Despite growing a lot stronger, he was far too weak to fight against them.

The first meeting between Jong Ho and Min-Cheol wasn't that great.

A child had appeared in front of him, requesting to board his vehicle when he was hurrying to move so that he could receive some of the rewards for defending against the portal explosion.

Even now, he found himself laughing when he thinks back to that time.

He couldn't even think of what would've happened if he had pushed Min-Cheol aside instead.

Thinking about his own personality, it wouldn't have been far

fetches to say that he might have.

Half a year had passed since that meeting.

All sorts of incidents kept occurring, and Jong Ho was right there by his side.

However, he was feeling a different kind of anxiety this time.

For some reason, he didn't feel good about today.

He definitely knew firsthand about how strong Min-Cheol was.

On top of that, he also knew just how much experience Min-Cheol had obtained.

However, now, in this situation...

"How... How long has it been?"

"....."

"Haha. Maybe I mistook the time of entry, hyung-nim."

"It's been over an hour."

"Hey. There's no way. Are you sure that you didn't misread it?"

"....."

"Well shit! This doesn't make any sense!"

Just like that, one hour had passed since Min-Cheol had entered the dungeon.

Thinking about the time limit regarding dungeon entry, at least one of them should have exited.

Or perhaps, both had perished in there.

The outside of the dungeon that the two were guarding was eerily quiet.

"What is this! Why isn't he coming out!"

Chapter 85 - Ghost's End. My Beginning.

“Whew.....”

40 minutes had passed since my fight with Ghost began.

Calling forth different egos, he continued to attack.

There were roughly 15 corpses sprawled over the floor.

All of them were corpses of Ghost, each wearing their golden armor.

In a single body, there are many sides of oneself that make up the mind.

In this case, however, each time his life expired, a new body would be created, carrying a different Ghost.

It was difficult to understand exactly what Ghost's ability did.

I felt as though his name 'Ghost' wasn't just for show.

However, he didn't have much power behind his attacks.

It was just that the prolonged fight was wearing me down.

I used Heal between fights, but it was only a C ranking recovery magic.

My stamina and strength stats were increased so much that Heal wasn't affecting me much.

Strength and stamina both raised the ability to stay in combat longer.

In theory, it would make sense for me to continue fighting without any signs of weariness.

However, my attacks were that much stronger, and so it consumed that much more stamina.

I thought to myself that I needed to learn at least a single good recovery skill.

He continued to pull out many egos.

He seemed to have collected many different classes, from summoner to magician, warrior, and many more.

It was amusing when he pulled out things that weren't human.

Lifeforms that didn't exist in this world. Monsters from another world.

Even some of the hidden bosses in some of the dungeons.

However, against me, who has gone through countless dungeons, it was nowhere enough.

“Urgh!”

“I think this is getting pretty tiresome.”

Only 10 minutes remained before the dungeon closed.

It happened when I defeated roughly the hundredth one, which was a ghastly form.

As the pathetic display of a fight continued, my anxiety continued to dissipate.

It was then.

“KUWWECCCKKK!”

The new form that Ghost took began to puke nonstop.

“Did you absorb someone who is an alcoholic.... What the?”

Looking towards him as he made that puking noise, I couldn't help but be shocked.

He was puking out all the souls of those that he had absorbed.

However, I couldn't see additional bodies of Ghost.

Instead, I saw a massive amount of souls, from children to the elderly.

They gave off a soft green glow, piling enough to make a small mound in front of Ghost.

Each form were clearly defined.

After leaving Ghost, they seemed to be free at first. However, there weren't any life in their eyes, each lacking pupils.

Almost like in the movies where the characters lose their souls to a spell from a warlock.

'If I deal with that many, the dungeon dissipate. If that's the case....'

-CRASH!

-BOOM!

Staring with Meteor, I used every magic attack skill I had on him.

However, only massive shock waves rang throughout the dungeon instead.

I wasn't able to deal any damage.

Almost like ghosts, all the attacks had gone through.

It was possible that unless the souls had flesh, I couldn't attack them.

Ghost, who stood behind them, used his staff to block all the magic attacks.

He remained silent.

Too busy puking out more souls, I suppose.

His continuous puking finally stopped.

Then I began to hear horrific screaming.

"AAAHH! KILL ME!"

"I WANT TO DIE! Please..."

"L...Let me go. I CAN'T HANDLE IT ANYMORE!"

Repeatedly grasping his hand into a fist and then stretching it flat, he took a deep breath.

Silencing their screams, he spoke.

“It’s been quite a while since I felt the warmth of flesh.... It’s almost awkward....”

“Are you the original body.... Park Joon Sik?”

It seemed that his original body had finally appeared.

However, before entering the dungeon, Ho Jin wasn’t able to recognize Ghost right away.

Did that mean that the ego he put on then wasn’t himself?

He really was confusing.

“Hmm.... Park Joon Sik. At this point, I’m not even sure if that name is really mine.”

“....”

“All the egos in my body believe that they are the rightful owner of my body. Well, since I am able to control all the souls that I’ve absorbed so far, I guess you could call this body the original.”

“You’re rather difficult. Disgusting and annoying. No matter who you may be, it’s time to end this.”

“Do you have the confidence to take on every soul that I’ve absorbed?”

“Even if you absorbed for another 10 years, or even 100 years, I can crush you whenever.”

“Then let’s begin! KUHAHAH!”

Finishing his words, Ghost stretched out his arms and the mountain of souls flew towards him.

Those that screamed and howled with lifeless eyes now formed around Ghost.

They were absorbed through his arms and legs, as well as his torso.

With each soul he absorbed, Ghost's golden armor was being covered by a barrier, growing thicker by the second.

The fights up to now have been 1v1, but now it was going to be one against many.

'10 minutes left..... I'll take care of this quickly and head to the Unknown Dungeon.'

-CRACK!

I was lost in thought for only a brief moment.

With a speed that was near impossible to follow, he appeared before me.

Not only that, but his short sword smashed my shield into pieces. All of it happened in a split second.

"Shit!"

-CLING! CLANG!

Fierce attacks followed, barely deflected by my sword.

As if amused by the current situation, he was shouting excitedly, even during his attacks.

"This is a good thrill. You wouldn't be afraid of a single grasshopper. But... what if they came in a swarm? You'll taste a famine unlike any other! Ki-ya!"

-SLICE!

"Crap!"

Attacks unlike before came at me.

Electronic Shock and True One Strike were used at the same time.

Magic of the highest rank from the magician class and a skill beyond ranking from the warrior class were used simultaneously.

Right now, Ghost couldn't be called human!

Like me, he was using skills from various different classes freely as he wished.

It felt as though he had gathered all the stats of those he had absorbed to create this completed form.

He was pouring out skills as if his mana was unlimited.

“Die! Die! Die! KUHAHA!”

“Damn it.”

It was a one sided fight.

Thanks to the stats I absorbed, I was only able to avoid the attacks with vastly increased speed.

The attack was so fierce that I couldn't even think about counterattacking.

From Ghost's view, the best defense was a good attack.

-SLICE!

-CRASH!

With the ease of casting Frost Orb, he poured out skills beyond ranking.

At this rate, I would meet a bad end.

Frothing at the mouth, Ghost spoke.

“I've invested a huge amount for your ability. Breaking down the tower that I've raised, I'll use you to raise a new tower! Now, hurry! Kneel before me, and offer me your ability!”

“You're insane... You'll die today. I'll rip you apart!”

I used all the shields I had to cover my body.

As I received all the attacks, I began my flurry of slices at him with my Formless Sword Aura.

The duration of my shields were 5 minutes long.

It wouldn't be far off from the time left before the dungeon

closed.

Things wouldn't end just by avoiding.

Power against power.

I planned to go all out against him in the last 5 minutes.

“KUWAAA!”

Pulling out all the strength I had, I continued to attack him.

However, he ignored the the damage he took from the Formless Sword Aura and continued to attack.

It was then.

“KURRUHH.”

“It's done!”

“KUHAA! KUHAHA! DIE!”

The Fear.

It was definitely the howling that signaled the activation of Wild Beast.

In a single moment, it was as if all the blood in my vessels were replaced by magma, burning up my body.

At the same time, strength was overflowing to the point where I could no longer control it.

It was almost as if endorphin like hormones were filling my body like a waterfall.

“ORAAAAAA!”

“KU.... KUAH!”

I definitely had my eyes open, but I couldn't see anything.

The white of the dungeon disappeared from view, and the outline of his body filled my field of view.

1 minute. In the next 1 minute duration of Wild Beast, I had to

snuff out Ghost's life completely.

“KUWAAAA!”

“KUHUCK! KUWUHH!”

I heard the scream of Ghost, as well the screams of those that surrounded him, emitting a piercing scream.

The wild unrestrained flurry of attacks continued at Ghost.

Just like that, the 1 minute duration of Wild Beast ended, and I regained consciousness.

There wasn't anyone standing before me.

However, my sword aura didn't know how to stop, continuing to swing at nothing but thin air.

As my burning body calmed itself, exhaustion caught up.

Stopping my attack, I regained control of my breathing.

“Huff.... Huff...”

Looking down, I saw that Ghost had become a pool of bloody paste.

I cleaned off the blood and fat that caked it, then bent down to pick up the staff.

Using my Eye of Insight, I attempted to check it.

A sigh of relief came out, along with some muttering monologue.

“Finally... it's over....”

The information on the staff came up clearly.

Thus, it meant that Ghost was dead.

This was a rare weapon that could not have its information revealed until the owner perishes.

If the information on the weapon was revealed, it meant that the owner's life expired.

However, since I had used up an insane amount of stamina, I couldn't process the information.

On top of that, I didn't have the luxury to do so.

Less than 1 minute remained before the dungeon expired, after all.

I immediately took off my Mana Shield, and then used Dual Casting's third hand to cast Heal.

Heal had a low rate of recovery, but with three castings at the same time, I felt that the recovery speed was faster than I expected it to be.

I will head to the Unknown Dungeon.

On one hand, Jong Ho and Ho Jin would be waiting outside, worrying for me.

Also, I was worried about my mother back home.

However, a chance to grow as quickly as this would probably be difficult to come across again.

After all, it was the entrance to the Unknown Dungeon, which would only form with the sacrifice of many lives.

The two radical faction leaders that I've experienced firsthand both became stronger by going through this place.

They also had obtained their artifacts here.

Danger would come for me again.

My decision wasn't wrong.

According to Ghost, he said that it would take a day to clear this place.

Since I could pour out incredibly powerful skills without limits, it probably wasn't an exaggeration.

"A single day... It could be treated as being selfish, but this is a path I take for everyone's sake. Here I go."

My hesitation was brief.

I took the steps toward it.

The gate that took me in vibrated intensely as it pulled me in.

As soon as I entered the Unknown Dungeon, I noticed how damp it was.

It was a swamp that went up to my knees, reeking of a foul scent.

However, I was met with familiar faces that helped me forget this nasty feeling.

Monsters as far as I could see were present, and I could not see an end to them.

Experience? I didn't need something like that.

I was in a state where I had consumed more stats than it could ever be compared to leveling.

Covering my body with Mana Shield, I walked towards them.

“Time for some fun, properly this time.”

